HISTORY

OF THE

FRENCH NAVY

DURING

THE AMERICAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

PERCEIVED

BY A STUDY OF THE FRENCH NAVY AND ITS INSTITUTIONS

FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE 17TH CENTURY

TO THE YEAR 1877

BY

E. CHEVALIER,

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PARIS

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PREFACE

The American War of Independence is one of the most glorious eras in our history. Its results allowed France to erase the humiliating treaty England had imposed on it in 1763. We do not believe that the considerable role played by our navy from 1778 to 1783 has been accurately reported. Errors still remain today about the people and things of that time, which it is useful to eliminate. It has been said that the excessive caution of ministers had deprived the admirals of all initiative and harmed the success of our operations. At the beginning of the crisis that led to the war, the Versailles cabinet was far too circumspect. It misjudged the country's military interests by not anticipating our neighbors' attack. But as soon as the Battle of Ushant demonstrated the strength of our squadrons, the government regained all confidence and encouraged the admirals more than it held them back. We will see Count d'Estaing justify himself to Mr. de Sartines for not having been as bold as would have been desired in Paris. Marshal de Castries wrote, in 1781, to the commander of the Indian squadron: "The King, leaving the generals in charge of determining the operations that they consider most useful and most glorious for his forces, orders them to attack the English, separated or united, wherever it is possible to do so, except in the case of the obvious destruction of their forces.[2]

It therefore limits itself to informing Count d'Orves that the inactivity of his squadron is what it principally defends, that unfortunate events or inaction will be equally contrary to its views…. His Majesty deigns at the same time to assure Count d'Orves that it will not hold him responsible for the unfortunate events that might occur, but that he would be, if he did not employ all the resources that his spirit and courage can inspire in him to make the campaign equally useful and glorious for his forces." It is difficult to speak to generals in language that is both firmer and more encouraging.

According to some historians, the spirit of disobedience and indiscipline was the particular hallmark of the officers of this era. We will highlight the serious errors that were made on this point.[1] The French do not easily admit that they can be beaten. When this misfortune befalls them, they are inclined to see those who command them as cowards or traitors. In the rather rare case where public opinion sides with the generals, it is in the lower ranks that it seeks the culprits. While it is fair to blame the French for this regrettable tendency, we must especially be harsh with the writers who, without evidence, echo these rumors. We recognize that this method greatly simplifies their task. It spares them the often lengthy and difficult research necessary to arrive at the truth. These banal accusations not only have the disadvantage of being unjust, they have other, much more serious consequences.

1) When studying the Battle of Dominica in the original documents, we search in vain for the basis on which historians could have based their accusations of indiscipline, rivalry, or jealousy against the captains of the French squadron. This is an easy way to explain the loss of the battle, but it is completely inaccurate. Similar observations can be made about the battle of Ushant and the campaign of Count d'Estaing on the coasts of North America and in the Antilles.[3]

What lessons can be learned from events if lack of courage, indiscipline, or incapacity are presented as the sole cause of our defeats? What importance can a nation attach to military institutions if it is kept in the belief that bravery is sufficient for everything? Such practices have the effect of dishabituating minds from work and reflection.

The American War of Independence was fought by a navy that was strongly constituted in all its parts. The institutions that governed it dated from Colbert and Seignelay. They had undergone modifications since 1689 that were not beyond criticism, but, taken as a whole, they were eminently suited to providing France with good squadrons. Nevertheless, whether because Paris had not foreseen the duration of the war, or because ideas of economy had prevailed, our maritime organization had not been based on a broad enough foundation. The inadequacy of the naval staff became apparent from the very beginning of hostilities. The expansion of armaments exacerbated this situation. By withstanding this ordeal, the naval personnel demonstrated their considerable strength, but this state of affairs led to a significant decline in the value of our fleets. The flexibility of the naval staff, and this is a consideration that must not be lost sight of during peacetime, has a limit that cannot be crossed without danger.

The personality of Bailiff de Suffren stands out with particular vigor among the English and French admirals who commanded from 1778 to 1783. The successes he achieved on the Coromandel Coast made us forget the unfortunate outcome of the Battle of Dominica. What has been written about the Indian campaign has been borrowed, for the most part, if not entirely, from an account by M. Trublet de la Villejégu.

1) Mr. Trublet de la Villejégu was second in command of the fifty-man ship, the *Flamand*, which belonged to the India squadron. Having left France as a fireship captain, he was made, upon his return, a Knight of Saint Louis and lieutenant. This double award indicates that he had served very honorably. In his account of the Indian campaign, he reports, with unquestioning good faith, what was being said around him. A few examples will demonstrate, once again, how difficult it is, even when one is present in an fleet or squadron, to know what is happening on the battlefield. [4]

This book contains errors that are all the more unfortunate because they mainly concern individuals. The truth about this memorable campaign can only be learned by consulting not just a few letters, but all of Suffren's correspondence. The journal kept by the major of the India squadron also provides valuable information.

There are numerous documents in the Naval Archives concerning the American War of Independence.[1] I have cited a few of them, chosen from among those that seemed to me to be of particular value. Documents of this nature, when placed at the end of a book, almost always go unnoticed. Therefore, I thought it useful to place them where they serve as a demonstration. This method is especially necessary when dealing with events that have given rise to much discussion, such as the Battle of Ushant, the Franco-Spanish expedition in 1779, the Count of Grasse's campaign, the campaign in India, and the attack on Gibraltar by Colonel d'Arçon's floating batteries. Only original documents can, in certain cases, provide a very clear idea of the thinking of ministers or admirals. It also seemed to me that letters from men like Suffren, d'Orvilliers, de Guichen, and Lamotte-Picquet, written on war matters or on subjects related to the navy, would be read with great interest.

The account of the events in which our squadrons took part from 1778 to 1783 is preceded by a study of the French navy before that time.

1) These documents form a total of one hundred and thirty-three handwritten volumes, of which forty-four are devoted to the battle of *Dominica*.[5]

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I have recalled the beginnings of this navy, created by Richelieu, abandoned under the Regency, revived, and definitively established by Louis XIV and Colbert. Some of the most important maritime events have been reported. I have gone into some detail about the naval battles of 1672, in order to counter the generally held opinion that France was untrustworthy in England.[1]

One can only appreciate the elements of a campaign, whether on land or at sea, if one is fully aware of the forces with which it was undertaken. This is why I wanted to describe precisely the organization of the French navy at the time the American War of Independence broke out. It is difficult to speak of the institutions of an era without saying a few words about those that preceded them. In this order of ideas, things follow one another, and today's regime is always directly related to that of the day before. This is at least the rule for regular times. I was therefore led to discuss maritime institutions relating to periods prior to 1778. I took the beginning of the seventeenth century as my starting point. The navy, as we understand it today, did not exist before the ministry of Cardinal Richelieu.

Whatever transformations the equipment undergoes, the principles on which military art is based remain unchanged. The study of past wars has the great advantage of allowing men at the head of fleets or armies to avoid the mistakes made by their predecessors. It provides them with points of comparison whenever they find themselves faced with unexpected events. There is little improvisation on the battlefield, and, in the navy as in the army, one must arrive before the enemy with training acquired in advance.

1.) A maritime novel by Eugène Sue, entitled *History of the French Navy*, 1845, has done much to support this error.[6]mailto:https://archive.org/details/histoiredelamar00suegoog/mode/2up

{Note: Eugène Sue was a writer of historical fiction, it is unknown if this work was fiction}

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Boldness in counsel, energy, and promptness of decision-making stem from knowledge much more than temperament, which the public is not always inclined to believe. An officer who does not have an accurate understanding of his position and that of the enemy is rarely enterprising. Although Lieutenant General d'Estaing distinguished himself by extremely brilliant personal bravery, we will see him act, as squadron leader, with extreme timidity. He did not dare, as Suffren wrote, "to attack seven small ones with twelve large vessels, because they were defended by a few shore batteries."[1] Instructions, ordering the commander of the India squadron to return his ships to the Isle of France, reached Suffren in mid-1782. Convinced that this order was contrary to our interests, he did not hesitate to disobey it. By refusing to go to meet the reinforcements announced by the minister, he assumed responsibility for any setbacks he might suffer. He also took it upon himself to maintain his squadron on the Coromandel Coast, where we had neither ports nor stores. Suffren being an exceptional man, his conduct cannot serve as a rule, but we can cite the example of Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers. He was cruising, in July 1778, at the entrance to the English Channel, when the French government was informed of Admiral Keppel's departure. The English fleet was superior to ours in terms of the number of cannons. Mr. de Sartines, bringing this news to the attention of the commander of our fleet, gave him authorization to return to Brest. "I have informed the captains of my squadron," replied the admiral, "that I intend to remain at sea for a month, and unless I receive a formal order, I will not return before the time I have indicated."

1.) Rear Admiral Barrington, after landing English troops on Saint Lucia in December 1779, had anchored with seven ships in one of the island's bays. D'Estaing came from Martinique to the aid of Saint Lucia with landing troops and a squadron of twelve ships.[7]

The decision taken by this general officer did not imply any particular intrepidity on his part. His response was that of a squadron leader possessing firmness and, above all, insight.[1] It is in resolutions of this nature that the courage of generals consists.

1.) The Count d'Orvilliers was considered by the entire navy to be the most capable general officer to command a large squadron. He had fought in the two wars of 1741 and 1756. He was sixty-eight years old at the beginning of the American War of Independence.[8]

BOOK I

The French navy dates back to Louis XIII. - Abolition of the office of Grand Admiral. Cardinal Richelieu is appointed Grand Master, Chief and Superintendent of Navigation and Commerce. - Creation of the first troops assigned to the service of the fleet. The Cardinal's efforts to lay the foundations of a permanent maritime establishment. Services rendered by the naval forces under his ministry. - The navy declines under the regency of Anne of Austria. - Reign of Louis XIV. Colbert, Minister of the Navy. Rapid development of our naval forces. Colbert's institutions and ordinances. Ministry of the Marquis de Seignelay. Main events in which the navy took part under Louis XIV.

I

The navy, as we understand it today, that is, comprising equipment and personnel maintained at state expense and exclusively devoted to its service, dates only from Louis XIII. Henry IV had thought of creating a navy, but the difficulties of the times in which he lived did not allow him to undertake this patriotic task.

1. "One would search in vain in the archives, before the year 1660, for correspondence sufficiently consistent to form a satisfactory picture of our navy. I found there only a small number of original documents and a few statements prior to this period. However, in order not to leave such a considerable gap in this interesting section, I felt it necessary to go back further..... I managed to begin the details of our various armaments from the year 1610, when Louis XIII ascended the throne. I have focused, with all the more reason, on the reign of this prince, because he can be regarded as the restorer of our navy, which had fallen into such great annihilation since Henry II, that under Henry IV, France could barely have put four ships to sea. (*Histoire manuscrite de la Marine française de* 1610 *à* 1763.). The author, Mr. Porque d'Amécourt, was keeper of the archives and first clerk of the deposit of papers of the navy and the colonies. He exercised these functions from 1761 to 1785.[9]

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Twelve years after his successor's accession to the throne, our maritime weakness was such that the government was unable to put to sea a sufficient fleet to stop the depredations committed by some Protestant ships on the coasts of Guiana, Poitou, and Brittany. In 1625, Louis XIII was obliged to request the assistance of a foreign power to fight the rebellious Rochellois. By virtue of a treaty signed at The Hague by our ambassador, the Count of Lesdiguières, the States-General undertook to place twenty warships at our disposal. It was agreed that twelve of these ships would have French captains and crews. We had introduced this clause out of fear that the Dutch would take sides with their coreligionists during the campaign. This situation was as humiliating for national pride as it was dangerous for our security. Cardinal Richelieu resolved to give France a war fleet that would allow it to take the rank among maritime nations assigned to it by the extent of its coasts and the resources of its territory. The institutions of that time presented serious obstacles to the execution of his plans. Maritime affairs were placed under the direction of a dignitary who bore the title of Admiral of France. This admiral was a prince of the blood or one of the most important men in the State. He had by right the command of the naval forces and ports. It was up to him to appoint officers and officials serving in the navy. Operations, of whatever nature, carried out in the arsenals on behalf of the King fell under his authority. With this organization, the unity of views essential to achieving the goal pursued by the cardinal could not exist. It was indeed difficult to believe that the admiral would consent to be nothing more than the docile instrument of the minister's wishes. On the other hand, the power that this person possessed was a fact absolutely irreconcilable with Richelieu's ideas on government.[10]

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The admiralty, whose holder, Henri de Montmorency, received an indemnity of twelve hundred thousand pounds, was abolished in 1626. The office that was disappearing had, in its time, constituted a very real step forward over the past. It had absorbed the particular admiralties of the Levant, Guyenne, Normandy, and the Île-de-France. As a result of this measure, the government of our country had taken a step towards centralization. The reform implemented by Richelieu completed the work begun. The King created the office of Grand Master Chief and Superintendent of Navigation and Commerce, and entrusted it to Cardinal.[1]

Whoever occupied this new position was to enjoy, if not all the honors, at least all the rights previously vested in the Admiral of France. As a result, Richelieu found himself in possession of the authority necessary to carry out his plans. The Assembly of Notables, meeting in Paris at the end of 1626, asked the King, on his proposal, that the State permanently maintain forty-five warships. There should also be in the Mediterranean Sea a certain number of galleys always ready for active service. Without a navy, it was said on this occasion, one can neither profit from peace nor wage war advantageously. It would be a mistake to think that these maxims have lost their value. The Cardinal's hand had already shown itself in naval affairs. When he found himself obliged to resort to the States-General to ensure the security of our coasts, he had ordered ten warships from the most skilled builders in Holland on behalf of the French government.

1. The rank of vice-admiral, which existed at that time, was abolished at the same time as the admiralship. A general intendant of navigation replaced the vice-admiral, just as the grand master chief and superintendent of navigation and commerce replaced the admiral.[11]

It was he who had decided, in 1622, to create one hundred companies, under the title of Ordinary Companies of the Navy, to serve on warships. Until then, soldiers embarked on the fleets were taken from the ranks of the land army. In 1627, the one hundred detached companies were abolished, and the men who comprised them formed a regiment which took the name of the Marine Regiment. The Free Companies of 1622 and the Marine Regiment into which they merged five years later were the first naval troops whose existence was officially recorded. It should be noted that these were not troops intended to serve in ports or colonies, but men called upon to form a very significant portion of the crews of the war fleet. In 1627, the King marched an army against the city of La Rochelle, a stronghold that the Protestants possessed by virtue of the Edict of Nantes. The government of Great Britain, claiming to be the guarantor of the treaties concluded with the Reformed, sent a fleet, under the command of Buckingham, to rescue them. The English occupied part of the Île de Ré. Our troops managed to drive them out, but the enemy, remaining master of the sea, retained the ability to resupply the place. Twenty small vessels, assembled by the Cardinal, provided useful assistance to military operations. It was with their help that we landed on the Île de Ré, but this flotilla was insufficient to cut off the besieged's communications with the open sea. However, the generals declared that La Rochelle would be impregnable as long as this condition was not met. Lacking a naval force capable of meeting this requirement, the Cardinal decided to close the port with a dike.

1.) The naval archives contain no documents indicating the existence of naval troops before this date.[12]

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This work, thanks to the skill of the engineer Clément Métézau, in charge of this important operation, and the dedication of our soldiers, was completed by mid-1628.[1] From then on, all attempts to bring relief into the city were futile. La Rochelle, overcome by famine, opened its gates in October. Richelieu had presided over all the siege operations, as the King's lieutenant. He had witnessed the difficulties the army had encountered. While the method used to close the port was a badge of honor for the besiegers, the construction of the dike had cost a great deal of time and money that would have been saved if a French squadron, cruising off La Rochelle, had blocked the enemy's access. The Cardinal, more convinced than ever of the inferiority to which France would find itself condemned if it did not have a navy, immediately set to work to lay the foundations of a great maritime establishment. Warships became the property of the State. Ports were improved and fortified, and, at the head of each of them, an ordinance, dated March 29, 1631, placed a general commissioner and a squadron leader.[2] These two officials, to whom officers were attached, were given the task of repairing and maintaining the vessels located in our arsenals, and of equipping those designated by the minister to go to sea. Captains and lieutenants, destined to embark on warships, were kept in permanent service. Richelieu allocated them a pay on land separate from that which they received at sea.

1. This dike was 740 fathoms long. It was thirteen feet high and eighteen feet wide at its base. It was constructed by pouring masonry-filled buildings. The details of its execution were entrusted to a master mason from Paris, named Jean Tircot.

2. Under Colbert, we will see all services in the ports culminate in two officials, one military and the other belonging to the civil order, namely: the naval commander and the intendant. In these two officials, it is easy to recognize the general commissioner and the squadron leader, placed in charge of the ports by the ordinance of 1631.[13]

He founded gunnery schools and appointed, in each port, an officer specifically responsible for artillery service. [1] The necessary equipment was stored in the stores to arm the ships afloat. A second regiment of marine troops, which took the name of the Royal Regiment of Vessels, was created in 1635. The service of officers and crews on land and at sea was regulated. At that time, there was no specific legislation for the navy. In military ports, as well as on vessels temporarily armed for the King, the laws and customs in use on merchant ships were applied. A penal code, intended for the state navy, appeared in 1634. [2]

Although pushed into the background by the advent of round vessels, as sailing ships were called, galleys retained great importance. They were led by Pierre de Gondi, who held the title of General of the Galleys. This position gave him command of the Hyères Islands and the King's lieutenant general in the seas of the Levant.

1. The following few lines, taken from a statement of expenses approved by Richelieu, will give an idea of the cardinal's views and his organizational skills. "To one hundred gunners who, in addition to those currently employed in the ships, will be obliged to serve on all occasions when they are summoned, fifty pounds each, amounting to a total of five thousand pounds; to three master gunners who will be at the three schools established in Normandy, Brittany, and Guyenne, who will be obliged to instruct young people in their art, two hundred pounds each, amounting to six hundred pounds." To one hundred and fifty young men, from the age of fifteen to twenty-five, from all castes closest to the towns where the squadrons will be established to be trained to be gunners, ten pounds each, amounting in all fifteen hundred pounds. For the powders which will be consumed in the three gunnery schools established above, at the rate of four thousand per school, which make twelve thousand which, at ten sols per pound of powder, come to six thousand pounds. For the prizes which will be given twelve times a year, to each of the schools which, for the three, make thirty-six, at the rate of thirty pounds and for prizes which will be used in cloth to clothe those who win them, amounting in all one thousand eighty pounds. " We see that the great minister understood the necessity of having, not only a reserve, but a trained reserve.

2. This work was done, by order of Richelieu, under the direction of the commander of the Porte, general intendant of navigation.[14]

Richelieu obtained, for compensation of five hundred and sixty thousand pounds, the transfer of this office to the son of one of his sisters, the Marquis François de Vignerot du Pont de Courlay. The latter carried out the functions of his office, as far as the military aspect was concerned. He commanded the galleys when they were sent to sea, but the Cardinal retained the superior direction of this service in his hands. This was, moreover, the goal he had set for himself when entrusting this position to his nephew. In 1635, war broke out between France, allied with Holland, and Spain. Forty warships, with between eight and fifty-two cannons, six fire ships, and fourteen cargo ships were assembled in June 1636 in the harbor of Belle-Île. This fleet, the armament of which represented, on the part of the Cardinal and his agents, a considerable effort, was commanded by Henri de Lorraine, Count of Harcourt. The latter had, at his side, as advisor, Monseigneur d'Escoubleau de Sourdis, Archbishop of Bordeaux, who had played a very brilliant role at the siege of La Rochelle.[1] The captain of the flagship, Commander Des Gouttes, an old officer with great experience at sea, was from a purely maritime point of view, the true head of the Fleet.[2] The instructions addressed to the Count of Harcourt prescribed him to go to the Mediterranean. He was to come to an agreement with Marshal de Vitry, Governor of Provence.

1. The King appointed the archbishop "head of his advisors to the said Count of Harcourt....., to assist him in the councils to be held regarding the employment of the army and on all matters concerning the said army, and to, under the authority of His Majesty and that of the said Count of Harcourt, have charge of the subsistence of the said army, provisions, munitions, and crews, with the power to arrange for the taking, on all vessels encountered at sea, of the provisions, tackle, and munitions that the said naval force might need, upon payment, while nevertheless leaving to the said vessels what would be necessary for the remainder of their voyage."

2. The cardinal had the utmost confidence in the intelligence of this officer and his maritime ability.[15]

He was to come to an agreement with Marshal de Vitry, Governor of Provence, to retake the Lérins Islands, which the Spanish had taken from us the previous year. The King and his minister were particularly keen to see this project carried out. After embarking a force of fourteen thousand soldiers, the fleet set sail for the strait.[1].

1. The composition of this fleet will be of interest. By referring to the maritime situation in France at the time of the Siege of La Rochelle, one will realize the results achieved by the Cardinal, ten years after he took office as Grand Master, Chief and Superintendent of Navigation and Commerce. Warships were not classified, as they were a few years later, and their strength was, at that time, indicated by tonnage. The Count of Harcourt was heading for the Mediterranean with the vessels designated hereinafter: the *Grand Saint-Louis*, of a thousand tons, Des Gouttes, captain; the *Fortune*, of five hundred tons, Poincy, captain; the *Licorne*, of five hundred tons, Montigny, captain; the *Corail*, of five hundred tons, Rigault, captain; the *Ciguë*, of five hundred tons, Cangé, captain; the *Cocq*, of five hundred tons, La Fayette, captain; the *Saint-Michel*, of five hundred tons, Cou, captain; the *Sainte-Genefuieue*, of five hundred tons, Beaulieu, captain; the *Perle*, of three hundred tons, Boisjoly, captain; the *Magdelaine*, of three hundred tons, Guitault, captain; the *Church*, of three hundred tons, Miramont, captain; the *Hermine*, of two hundred tons, Coursac, captain; the *Sainte-Marie*, of two hundred tons, Portenoire, captain; the *Royale*, of one hundred and twenty tons, Rozet, captain; the *Patache of M. de Cou*, of fifty tons, Pourpardin, captain; the *Europe*, of five hundred tons, Mante, captain; the *Saint-Louis*, of five hundred tons, Giron, captain; the *Lion-d'Or*, of three hundred tons, Beaulieu-Pressac, captain; the *Intendant*, of three hundred tons, Arpantigni, captain; the *Saint-Louis de Hollande*, of three hundred tons, Vaillebois, captain; the *Renommée*, of three hundred tons, Charles Duval de Couppeauville, captain; the *Saint-Jean*, of three hundred tons, Vaslin, captain; the *Marguerite*, of two hundred tons, La Treille, captain; *the Saint-François*, of two hundred tons, Reguier, captain; the *Lionne*, of two hundred tons, Beaulieu le jeune, captain; the *Palmande*, of two hundred tons, Cazennac, captain; the *Espérance*, of two hundred tons, d'Arrérac, captain; the *Ange*, of two hundred tons, Petonnier, captain; the *Gascon* Frigate, of one hundred and twenty tons, Gabaret, captain; the *Saint-Vincent*, of three hundred tons, La Bouillerie, captain; the *Magdelaine*, of three hundred tons, Mé d'Aplemont, captain; the *Marguerite*, of two hundred tons, Chastellux, captain; the *Sainte-Anne*, of two hundred tons, Pontrincourt, captain; the *Aigle*, of two hundred tons, *Louis Havart*, captain; the *Levrette*, of two hundred tons, Daniel, captain; the *Neptune*, of two hundred tons, Du Quesne, captain; the *Griffon*, of two hundred tons, La Chesnaye, captain. The number of cannons, on the whole of this fleet, was four hundred and two. The number of guns in the whole fleet was four hundred and two. The flagship, the *Grand-Saint-Louis*, had forty-six guns and a crew of two hundred and ninety-five men. The number of guns and the number of crewmen was proportional to the tonnage.[16]

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In the first days of August, the Count of Harcourt rallied the galleys of the Marquis du Pont de Courlay and a sailing squadron commanded by the Baron d'Allemagne at the Hyères Islands. He took, in accordance with court orders, command of all our naval forces. Due to disputes between the Governor of Provence and the Count of Harcourt, the year passed in inaction. Marshal de Vitry had allowed the Lérins Islands to be captured through his negligence. The King, perhaps remembering the day of April 24, 1617, and assuming, on the other hand, that the Marquis de Vitry would make every effort to repair his fault, had shown himself very lenient. However, yielding to the cardinal's entreaties, he had placed the marshal under the guardianship of Monseigneur Gabriel de Beauveau de Rivarenne, Bishop of Nantes. This prelate had taken up his post in January 1636, but he had not managed to soften the violent temper of the man he was to lead.

At a council of war held in early 1637, the marshal, displeased to find Monseigneur de Sourdis unwilling to accept his advice, flew into a rage to the point of striking him. When these facts became known, the King once again postponed harsh measures; but the marshal, having continued, despite formal orders from the court, to live on bad terms with the archbishop, was summoned to Paris. The Count of Harcourt seized the Lérins Islands in May 1637. On September 1, 1638, an encounter took place off the coast of Italy, not far from Genoa, between the galleys of France and Spain. The Marquis du Pont de Courlay won a brilliant victory.

1. On April 24, 1617, Nicolas de l'Hopital, Marquis de Vitry, had killed Concini (Marshal d'Ancre) with a pistol shot on the Louvre Bridge.

2. After being severely reprimanded, the Marshal was sent back to his government. As his conduct did not improve, his disgrace became permanent. He was arrested on October 27, 1627, among his troops and taken to Paris. Imprisoned in the Bastille, he did not leave until after the cardinal's death.[17]

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That same year, Monseigneur de Sourdis supported Condé's operations as he besieged Fontarabia with a fleet comprising thirty-seven warships and four fireships. He inflicted very serious losses on a Spanish division anchored in the small port of Guetaria. The following year, in July, the Archbishop was en route to Corunna when his squadron was dispersed by an extremely violent gale. Some of his ships disappeared in the storm; others sustained considerable damage. After remaining for some time at Belle-Île for repairs, Monseigneur de Sourdis put to sea again. He ended his campaign without having the good fortune to encounter the enemy. In 1640, Armand Maillé de Brézé, placed at the head of the Ocean squadron, defeated the Spanish off the coast of Cadiz. In 1641, Monseigneur de Sourdis, called to command our naval forces in the Mediterranean, was tasked with blockading Tarragona, which was besieged by a French army. On July 3, he made a first engagement with the Spanish galleys, which was favorable to him. Attacked on the 22nd by superior forces, the archbishop was forced to lift the blockade. Our retreat allowed the Spanish to resupply Tarragona. However, this city was short of provisions, and it was on the verge of capitulation. The disappointed besiegers sent very strong complaints to Paris against the squadron. The conduct of Monseigneur de Sourdis, on July 3 and 22, had been irreproachable. Such was the opinion of his principal officers, among whom was Du Quesne. Nevertheless, his failure before Tarragona brought him disgrace.

1. The ship *La Couronne* was part of Bishop de Sourdis's squadron. This vessel, the largest we were sailing at that time, had a keel of 120 feet and a total length of 200 feet, measured from the stern of the sterncastle to the tip of the spur. Its greatest beam was 44 feet, and its height, from the top of the poop deck to the keel, 75 feet. This vessel carried 72 cannons in batteries. *La Couronne* had been built at La Roche-Bernard by a builder from Dieppe named Morieu.[18]

He lost his command, and he was forbidden to come to Paris to justify himself. For some time now, the Archbishop's services had not been favorably regarded at court. After having been the Cardinal's trusted man, Monseigneur de Sourdis had become suspect, and an officer, Monsieur de Besançon, had been placed with him to monitor him. The Archbishop had compromised himself with imprudent words, and he had entered into relations with the Cardinal's enemies, something the latter could not forgive.

At the death of Louis XIII, which occurred in May 1643, a few months after that of his minister,[1] France's maritime situation bore vivid witness to the Cardinal's efforts and the success of his enterprise. The French flag flew with honor on all the seas. We had ports, arsenals, foundries, personnel specially designated for the navy, and ships fit to sail and fight. The merchant navy, which had been the object of the cardinal's particular attention, had developed rapidly. France had establishments in the Antilles, Florida, Canada, on the coasts of Africa, and Madagascar. Colonization had received a very strong impetus in all these areas. In replacing the Admiral of France, under the title of Grand Master Chief and Superintendent of Navigation and Commerce, the cardinal had not obeyed a feeling of vulgar ambition.[2] The interest of France, over whose destiny he presided, had been the sole motive of his conduct.

When this great minister died, his work was not completed, but, in the organization he left behind him, it is easy to recognize the principles that later served as the basis for Colbert's institutions.

1. The cardinal had died on December 4, 1642.

2. In accordance with the cardinal's request, the King had decided that the new position would not carry a salary. Furthermore, Richelieu was not called upon to command the squadrons. What remained to him was the authority necessary to direct the navy according to his own wishes.[19]

II

During the first years of Anne of Austria's regency, the navy played a very honorable role. The Duke of Brézé, at the command of twenty-two warships and two fire ships, encountered the Spanish on August 9, 1643, off the coast of Barcelona. He attacked them and captured five ships. In a second encounter on September 3, the enemy suffered further losses. The Spanish, greatly weakened by these two defeats, remained without undertaking anything at sea for several years. In June 1646, the Duke of Brézé was cruising off Orbitello to cover the siege of that city from the sea with twenty-five warships, twenty galleys, and ten fire ships, when the enemy was reported. Admiral Don Francisco Diaz Pimienta had twenty-five vessels, thirty galleys, and eight fire ships under his command. After a very lively fight, the Spanish admiral, although he had superior numbers, abandoned the battlefield to us. The Duke of Brézé, who had conducted himself very valiantly, having been killed, Mazarin appointed as his successor the one who was the true head of the fleet, Commander Des Gouttes. In 1647 and 1653, the French squadrons, under the command of Marshal de la Meilleraye, the Duke of Richelieu and the Duke of Vendôme, successfully supported the operations of the French troops in Spain and Italy. The troubles of the Fronde ruined this nascent navy. The arsenals were left in destitution, the ships afloat decayed, and no new construction was undertaken. The personnel, as neglected as the equipment, disappeared or was diverted from its intended purpose. When royal authority had been restored, Mazarin gave some attention to the navy, whose services were necessary to him in fighting the Spaniards.[20]

20

The attempts made at that time to reorganize our naval forces were not pursued with sufficient vigor to achieve any serious results. The development of the navy did not resume its progress until 1666. Colbert had the honor of completing, or to speak more truthfully, of making his own, the work begun by Richelieu. When he took office as Intendant of Finance, in charge of the Navy, he found the treasury empty and several years' revenues spent in advance. In our ports, where complete abandonment reigned, we had about thirty vessels, among which were three vessels of sixty to seventy cannons. A year later, thanks to the order he brought to the finances, Louis XIV was able to give five million to King Charles II of England to repurchase Dunkirk. Work was immediately undertaken to fortify this place and dig a dock between the city and the citadel. The ports of Brest and Toulon were expanded, and Rochefort was created. Men earning a living from the sea—fishermen, coastal traders, and long-distance sailors—were included on special lists. The minister had a basis for calculating the extent that could be given to our armaments. Sailors were divided into three classes, each to serve in turn on state vessels. This legislation advantageously replaced the violent measures used at that time to recruit crews for the war fleet. Nevertheless, the new ordinances placed a heavy burden on the maritime population. It was to alleviate this burden that Colbert established the invalids' fund.

1. When the State built armaments in Brest, Toulon, or Rochefort, the crews were formed by forcibly seizing sailors who were in neighboring ports. If this measure was insufficient, the commercial ports were closed along a certain stretch of coastline. Merchant ships were forbidden to put to sea until the personnel necessary for the needs of the moment had been assembled. Under these conditions, the regime devised by Colbert constituted a very serious advantage for the maritime populations. If this system had functioned regularly, it would have been considered a benefit by the sailors. But this was not how things happened. The wars that filled the reign of Louis XIV required continual armaments. The Navy Department would have incurred a serious responsibility if the lack of men had been an obstacle to the departure of our squadrons. The training of crews was one of the most painful preoccupations of Colbert's career. This situation almost never allowed him to apply the rule he had made. Instead of being called up in turn, the classes were merged, and, most often, all the men of the maritime registration, present in our ports, were sent on the warships. This measure was very natural, since all were necessary for the defense of the country. These ideas, which are very well accepted today, were not understood at that time. On the other hand, this general call, coinciding with a regulation which spoke only of particular calls, left in the minds of the populations a deep hatred against the maritime registration, of which we will find traces for a long time.[21]

21

A 1673 ordinance decided that, in the future, a deduction of six deniers per livre would be made from the salaries of general and private officers of the navy and from the wages of crews "for the subsistence, maintenance, and reward of crippled petty officers and sailors on ships and for the establishment of a general hospital in each of the arsenals of Rochefort and Toulon." These two hospitals were not built, but, with the funds intended for this purpose, the Navy Department provided relief to men who would have been entitled to enter these establishments. This is the origin of the fund for disabled naval personnel and the pensions known as half-pay. The system was completed in 1703. From that time on, three deniers per livre were deducted from the proceeds of all prizes. In 1709, the deduction from pay, made for the benefit of the disabled, was lowered, but it affected the salaries of civil service personnel, as well as the wages paid by shipowners to sailors on merchant ships: "To be the said funds used for the payment of pensions that we will grant both to the disabled officers of our ships and galleys who are deemed worthy, and to the stewards and other officers of our ports and arsenals, as well as for the half-pay, both of sailors and soldiers and of the workers of our arsenals and galleys who have been crippled or who have aged, to which rewards will similarly be admitted the disabled or crippled officers, sailors and soldiers on merchant ships."[22]

22

Colbert organized the artillery service with particular care. Companies of apprentice gunners and bombardier companies were permanently attached to the ports of Brest, Toulon, and Rochefort. These companies, whose strength amounted to one hundred men for the former, and fifty for the latter, were commanded by a lieutenant and an ensign. The apprentice gunners spent eight months in the ports. After this period, devoted to their training, they returned to their quarters, while sailors from new levies came to take their places. The State permanently maintained a certain number of master gunners in each of our military ports. [1]

The naval troops, composed of the two regiments "the marine and the royal ship regiments," created by Richelieu, the first in 1626, and the second in 1635, were augmented in 1669 and 1670 by two new regiments, namely: "the royal marine and the admiral." In 1671, this personnel having proven superior to the needs of the fleet, Louvois obtained from the King that these four regiments be placed at his disposal. Colbert raised one hundred free companies for the service of his department. [2.]

1. An ordinance of 1694 established two admiral gunners and two vice-admiral gunners in Brest and Toulon, and two vice-admiral gunners in Rochefort. Vice-admiral gunners were chosen from among the maintained gunners, and admiral gunners from among the vice-admiral gunners. Admiral and vice-admiral gunners embarked only on ships bearing the distinctive mark of a general officer.

2. The free companies disappeared in 1689 to make way for the guard soldiers. The new institution did not last. The free companies were reestablished in 1694. Their strength was one hundred men; they were commanded by three officers who embarked with their companies.[23]

The soldiers of these companies stood guard in the arsenals when they were not on board.[1] On board the ships, in addition to the guard and police duties that were their responsibility, they took part in all work. Those among them who were able to play a useful role in the masts received additional pay. The ordinances and regulations, of which we have just briefly analyzed, ensured that warships had capable sailors, skilled gunners, and good musketry. The ranks of the free companies included the number of non-commissioned officers necessary for the proper management of this personnel. As for the petty officers themselves, apart from those who existed among the seamen of the classes, the State maintained masters of all professions. These masters, when not on board, were employed in the guard and maintenance of the decommissioned ships.

Colbert had founded arsenals, created fleets, and trained crews. The organization of a corps of officers was the essential complement to his work. In accordance with the provisions of a royal ordinance issued in 1669, the naval officer corps included three lieutenants-general, six squadron leaders, sixty captains, sixty lieutenants, sixty ensigns, and twenty fireship captains.[2]

1. During their time on land, the soldiers of the Compagnies Franches were sent in detachments to gunnery schools. They were taught the drill of the various guns used in the navy. They were also trained in loading and throwing grenades.

2. Colbert had the idea of creating, alongside the Royal Marine Corps, another corps composed of officers who had undergone a long apprenticeship in the naval profession in the lower ranks. In 1669, he wrote to Colbert du Terron: "I would even like to always put together, as much as possible, a good gentleman captain, a lieutenant and an ensign of the same, with three second-in-command sailor officers, all from the same country or friends, so that they can get along well together. Of course, whenever it would be useful in the King's service, the sailor would be put first and the gentleman second, and His Majesty would always maintain sixty captains, sixty lieutenants and sixty ensigns." This project was not followed up.[24]

This personnel seems insignificant, even when one considers the equipment existing at that time. But it was not long ago that the captain, the lieutenant, and sometimes the ensign represented what we today call a ship's general staff. An ordinance of 1676 increased the number of naval officers to the following figures: one admiral of France, two vice-admirals, three lieutenants-general, six squadron leaders, eighty-six ship captains, four majors, twenty light frigate captains, one hundred and twenty ship lieutenants, twenty fireship captains, one hundred and fifty ensigns, ten frigate lieutenants, and ten flute captains. The new ranks, made necessary by the sudden development of the navy, included officers who were not very suited to fulfilling their duties. Some had sailed little, others had only appeared on the decks of warships as officers in the naval troops. Finally, a few had left army service to immediately take command of either a squadron or a ship. Officers in this category still had the option of learning their new profession, but, assuming they had the will, a considerable amount of time would have to pass before this result could be achieved. [1]

1. One will note the unusual compromises to which Colbert was obliged to resort, due to the composition of the personnel. His Majesty, it was said in a royal ordinance, bearing the date of March 24, 1672, having granted commissions of second captains to several young officers to serve on his warships, and wishing to prevent disputes which could arise concerning the command between the said second captains and the former lieutenants, “His Majesty wishes and orders that in the event of absence, illness or otherwise of the captains in command of the vessels, the said former lieutenants have the principal command of the ship, to the exclusion of the said second captains; His Majesty wishes and intends that the said lieutenants be charged with the care of the fitting out, approval and repair of the vessels in the port, without being able to be interrupted by the said captains, nor that they can interfere in any way other than to attend only, and to acquire the necessary experience to properly carry out the commands which he will give them in the future.”[25]

In 1680, Marshal d'Estrées wrote to the Marquis de Seignelay: "Please find it good that I can represent to you again what I have done several times, that, notwithstanding this large number of gentlemen who throw themselves into the navy, it still needs sailor officers, that is to say, people raised by degrees and nurtured in the profession who have much more application than the gentlemen, so that it would be desirable that there be as many as forty of them, both lieutenants and ensigns, at least, in the entire corps." Colbert had abandoned the idea of creating the "sailor officers" that the marshal called for, but he had allowed something close to this organization to remain in practice. The navy department employed officers with temporary commissions. These officers, appointed by the minister, sometimes even by the captains of the ships on which they were embarked, were generally petty officers or pilots who, through their professional skill, had achieved this position.[1]

Colbert could not improvise what is achieved only over time, that is, a capable and homogeneous corps of officers.

1. Marshal d'Estrées wrote to M. de Seignelay on August 16, 1680: “It has been seven years since I hired Captain Brice, who is captain of arms on the *Excellent*, into the naval service, and I have since prevented him from leaving, although he was offered infantry companies, in the hope that I could provide him with a small subsistence. I have seen him, on very perilous occasions, maintain a great deal of composure and courage. He understands very well how to train soldiers; he has wit, looks, and is of fairly good family; and although I have, sir, the honor of speaking to you about him only in view of the service, I will nevertheless be infinitely obliged to you if you do something for him.” Captain of arms was then called an officer who took rank, on board ships, after the ensign. The captain of arms was responsible for muskets, pistols, balls, bandoliers, halberds, spontons, drum cases, pikes and battle axes.[26]

Finding himself in the need to train, in a few years, a large general staff, and obliged, on the other hand, to draw it, if not entirely, then at least for the most part, from the social milieu to which the army officers belonged, he could only strive to reconcile these diverse requirements. After facing, as we have just said, the difficulties of the present, he turned his attention to the future. Firmly convinced that personnel is the most solid foundation of any military organization, he wanted to ensure the recruitment of the fleet general staff under better conditions than those which had presided over its formation. Richelieu had decided, in 1627, that sixteen gentlemen, maintained at the expense of the state, would be instructed in everything relating to the navy and navigation. This was, in the cardinal's mind, the starting point for an institution intended to train officers for the royal navy. This project had no immediate follow-up, and it does not appear to have been taken up by his successors.[1] Upon the death of the Duke of Beaufort, killed at the Siege of Candia in 1669, the position of Grand Master, Chief and Superintendent of Navigation and Commerce, was abolished. The admiralty, reestablished under conditions that no longer made this dignity an obstacle to the minister's actions, was given to Louis de Bourbon, Count of Vermandois.[2] The Grand Masters and Superintendents of Navigation and Commerce had a special guard.

1. Richelieu's first successor was his nephew, Armand de Maillé, Duke of Fronsac and Brézé. Upon the death of Armand de Maillé, killed on June 14, 1646, in an encounter between the galleys of France and those of Spain, Mazarin considered taking over the navy. Not believing himself strong enough to emulate Richelieu, he persuaded Queen Anne of Austria to grant herself the Grand Mastership. In 1650, César de Vendôme was given this position, and after him, in 1665, his son François de Vendôme, Duke of Beaufort.

2. The Count of Vermandois was then two years old. It would be some time before he would attend to naval affairs. The office of Intendant-General of Navigation and Commerce of France disappeared at the same time as that of Grand Master, Chief and General Superintendent of Navigation and Commerce of France. The reestablishment of the admiralty revived the office of Vice-Admiral.[27]

At the time of his death, the Duke of Beaufort's force consisted of forty-nine guards, of whom twenty-five were designated to be attached to the Grand Admiral. These twenty-five guards, all belonging to the nobility of the kingdom, formed the first nucleus of the naval guards called to become officers. An ordinance of April 22, 1670, decided that two detachments would be made from the company of guards, one of which would serve in the Mediterranean and the other in the Ocean. This company was disbanded in 1671, but reappeared in 1672. In 1682, the King ordered the creation, in each of the ports of Brest, Rochefort, and Toulon, of a company of gentlemen naval guards. In 1676, the strength of the companies included seven hundred and six guards or officers. The guards received special training and became ensigns after meeting certain embarkation requirements. Beginning in 1673, naval guards were promoted to this rank.

Colbert focused his attention on all aspects of the service. The duties of captains and officers, discipline, pay and food for crews, and the armament and equipment of ships were regulated. The state was given all the timber needed for the navy. A council, established in each port, was tasked with deliberating on new constructions and refits in progress. This council was also tasked with reporting to the minister on improvements and refinements introduced in France and abroad in naval architecture. The organization of arsenals, which plays a significant role in the entire naval service, was the subject of carefully considered provisions. The ordinance of 1689 appeared under the ministry of the Marquis de Seignelay, but it only reproduced, with very slight modifications indicated by experience, the regulations issued by Colbert.[1]

1. A few figures will eloquently demonstrate the expansion of the navy during the time of this great minister. In 1661, the military fleet comprised three first-rate vessels of sixty to seventy guns, eight second-rate vessels of forty to fifty guns, and seven third-rate vessels of thirty to forty guns. In 1683, at the time of Colbert's death, we possessed twelve first-rate vessels, of seventy-six to one hundred and twenty guns, twenty second-rate vessels, of sixty-four to seventy-four guns, thirty-nine third-rate vessels, of fifty to sixty guns, twenty-five fourth-rate vessels, of forty to fifty guns, twenty-one fifth-rate vessels, of twenty-four to thirty guns, and twenty-five sixth-rate vessels, of six to twenty-four guns. This number does not include galleys, ships carrying fewer than six guns, fire ships, and cargo ships. We had, in addition, in 1683, sixty-eight vessels under construction. In summary, we had eighteen warships in 1661, and one hundred and forty-two in 1683.[28]

III

Colbert's first armaments were directed against the Barbary pirates. During 1663, two squadrons were tasked with destroying the corsairs of the regencies of Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli. The following year, the Duke of Beaufort set sail from Toulon on July 2nd and sailed for Mahon. After linking up with two ships from the Ocean, he headed for the coast of Algeria on July 17th. The forces under his command included sixteen vessels, eight galleys, twelve cargo ships, and twenty-five small vessels carrying supplies and equipment. Seven galleys from Malta had fallen into line under his flag. Expeditionary troops were embarked on the squadron. After landing at Bougie on July 21st, the army arrived off Djijelly on the 22nd. The Duke of Beaufort had orders to seize this point, which the French government intended to occupy permanently. The troops, put ashore under the protection of ships and galleys, entered the town after a very lively fight. The Duke of Beaufort set sail on October 27 with the bulk of the squadron.[29]

29

The army, having suffered rather serious losses in an encounter with the Arabs a few days later, appeared very discouraged. The generals, meeting in council, were unanimous in declaring that circumstances demanded the abandonment of Djijelly. The Marquis de Martel had anchored off the city on October 22nd with six ships. The troops embarked on his squadron on the night of October 31st. A deplorable event marked the end of this expedition. A transport ship, carrying several hundred soldiers, sank within sight of Marseille. Only a very small number of men were saved. In 1665, the Duke of Beaufort conducted a new campaign on the north coast of Africa. Upon his return, he received orders to keep his squadron ready to cross into the ocean. Louis XIV had resolved to unite with Holland, which was then at war with Great Britain. The Duke of Beaufort set sail from Toulon at the end of April 1666 with a squadron of thirty ships and ten fireships. Arriving in the last days of May on the coast of Portugal, he established himself on a cruise, in accordance with the orders of the court, to protect the navigation of a squadron commanded by Du Quesne. The latter was responsible for taking Mademoiselle d'Aumale to Lisbon. The departure of the future Queen of Portugal having been delayed, new instructions ordered the Duke of Beaufort to anchor at the entrance to the Tagus. At the end of July, fearing a shortage of supplies, he set sail for La Rochelle, where he anchored on August 23. The Dutch had not waited for us, and their fleet, commanded by Ruyter, had given battle to the English on June 11 and August 4.[1] The Duke of Beaufort, after being rallied by Du Quesne,[2] set sail to join our allies.

1. In the first engagement, the Dutch had gained a slight advantage over the English, but in the second, they had been defeated.

2. Du Quesne had accomplished his mission very successfully. He entered the Tagus on August 1st, without having any unpleasant encounters, and he left again on the 12th of the same month to join the Duke of Beaufort.[30]

It had been agreed that the State fleet would advance against the French as far as the entrance to the North Sea. Our squadron arrived off Dieppe when the Duke of Beaufort learned that the Dutch had entered the Texel. He crossed the Channel again and managed to reach Brest without being seen by the English, who held the sea with superior forces. In the spring of 1667, a truce, soon followed by peace, was concluded between France and Great Britain.[1]

At the beginning of 1669, Louis XIV determined to rescue the Venetians besieged by the Turks in Candia. On June 7, the Duke of Beaufort set sail from Toulon with sixteen vessels, ten fireships, and about twenty transports. Monsieur de Vivonne had left a few days earlier with thirteen galleys. Eight thousand men, commanded by General de Navailles, had taken passage on the expedition's ships. On the 19th, all the forces under the command of the Duke of Beaufort, with the exception of the galleys, anchored off Candia. The troops disembarked immediately, and a general sortie was decided upon. At daybreak on the 25th, the French and part of the garrison left the place. Twelve hundred men, taken from among the crews and marines, were put ashore. The squadron's commander-in-chief, the Duke of Beaufort, had refused to cede to anyone the honor of leading them into battle. Our troops, vigorously led, overthrew everything they found before them. After a few hours of fighting, they had captured the enemy's main positions. The French generals already considered themselves certain of success when an unexpected event changed the face of things.

1. In June 1667, before peace was concluded between Holland and Great Britain, Ruyter put to sea with sixty-nine vessels. After destroying the establishments at Chatham, he sailed up the Thames to Gravesend and made London tremble.[31]

31

A tremendous explosion occurred in a Turkish battery we had captured. A powder and grenade depot had caught fire. The soldiers, believing they were marching on mined ground, fled in panic. The Turks, who were in full retreat, noticing the disorder reigning in our ranks, returned to the charge. The Duke of Beaufort, indignant, threw himself upon the enemy with a handful of men. He was killed, as were most of those accompanying him. A few days later, the ships of the squadron, the galleys of M. de Vivonne, the galleys of the Pope, Malta, and Venice, took up position near the coast. All these vessels opened a very heavy fire on the Turkish camp. During this cannonade, which had no other result than to kill a few enemy men, the *Thérèse*, captained by Estoc, was blown up. They had been imprudent enough to bring a supply of canisters to the battery. The squadron's boats, immediately put to sea, picked up only a few men. Monsieur de Navailles, having unsuccessfully renewed the attempt of June 25, decided to re-embark. The general of the galleys, Monsieur de Vivonne, who had become commander-in-chief of the squadron following the death of the Duke of Beaufort, brought the ships and troops back to Toulon.

The body of the Duke of Beaufort had not been found. For some time, rumors circulated in Paris that the prince was a prisoner. This version was not accepted at court, and the King appointed him Grand Master of Navigation and Commerce on November 12, 1669.[1] The Duke of Beaufort had entered the navy in 1665. He had not, in a few years—which, incidentally, is not surprising—become a true squadron leader, but he had shown the greatest zeal for his new profession. He had been more often on the decks of ships than on land, and in ports than in Paris.

1. We have already stated that the King abolished the office of Grand Master upon the death of the Duke of Beaufort, and that he reestablished the admiralty in favor of the Count of Vermandois.[32]

Finally, he had taken part in every major maritime operation that had taken place since he became Grand Master. His bravery and enterprise were well-known. He could not be blamed, on June 25, for having compromised the safety of the fleet by fighting like a soldier, since the command-in-chief was held by Monsieur de Navailles. If he had rushed the Turks, at the head of a few men, it was with the hope of holding off the enemy for a time long enough to allow our soldiers to regroup. He devoted himself to setting an example and bringing shaken troops back to the fray. When a general dies under such conditions, his memory must be honored.[1]

Since France had concluded peace with Spain in 1659, our navy had fought only the Barbary pirates. A more serious test awaited the squadrons created by Colbert. At the beginning of 1672, Louis XIV joined forces with England against Holland. On May 13, Count d'Estrées rallied the forces commanded by the Duke of York in the harbor of Saint Helena, off Portsmouth.

1. While preparations for this expedition were being completed in Toulon, Paris was busy settling the respective positions of the leaders of the fleet and the army upon their arrival in Candia. The Duke of Beaufort learned that there was talk of limiting his role to the landing of M. de Navailles's small army. The thought of witnessing the troops' operations from his ship outraged him. He immediately wrote a letter to Colbert containing the following passage: "As for me, Sir, I have never thought of setting foot on land except with the naval troops, leaving the ships in safety. I asked the King verbally, in this way, and he had promised it to me, assuring him of a good understanding between M. de Navailles and me. Each doing his part and in full agreement, the actions would have been safer and with more brilliance. I even ventured to say to His Majesty that I believed I was not useless in such an encounter where quality and pride were not useless, which is highly regarded in the Levant. Moreover, I will dare to say that the land troops would not be sorry to see me at their side to second or support them; and if it is necessary, as it appears, that all the nations which make up the naval army, which must obey me, put people (sailors or marines) on land, surely they would not recognize M. de Navailles, which would cause great disorder. And if Mr. Rospigliosi ordered me to come down to command this detachment, would I have to refuse, and would it not be a shame for me, who, moreover, am hardly accustomed to keeping my coats..... " After quoting this letter, Mr. Jal, author of the life of Du Quesne, adds: Mr. de Beaufort wanted the bailiff Rospigliosi (this person was to represent the Pope in Candia for the entire duration of the expedition) to give him Highness, and negotiations were underway with Rome on this matter. "There is no wretch to whom one does not give that of excellence," said the Duke of Beaufort in this same letter. "His Majesty will have as much regard as he wishes, this quality affecting me a hundred times less than the desire to distinguish myself. I will despise everything, except opportunities to distinguish myself. Although I have seen some, I would be very sorry to be tired of seeing them." And further: "M. de Navailles can never be offended that I command troops under my charge, which, if I were not there, would not willingly obey him. In these matters, once again, it is good to strongly interest the sea and the land together..... As for the Highness and the rest, I don't care. The admiral," adds M. Jal, "won his case, which he argued so warmly in this letter of good and frank character, and full of reason, moreover.

All this correspondence shows the Duke of Beaufort in a light that is very favorable to him.[33]

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A few days later, eighty ships, including thirty French vessels, headed for the coast of Holland. On June 29, the allies found themselves facing the enemy. As the day drew to a close, the commander of the combined army thought it prudent to postpone the attack until the following day. A very thick fog enveloped the two fleets during the night. When it dissipated on the morning of the 30th, the Dutch were out of sight. The Duke of York brought his ships back close to the English coast and anchored in Southwood Bay.[1] The general direction of the anchorage was north and south. The three squadrons of the Anglo-French army were arrayed in the following order: the French squadron, forming the vanguard, then, moving north, the main body and the rearguard. At daybreak on June 7, the frigates signaled the fleet of the States-General. The Dutch were steering toward Southwood Bay with a light northeast breeze. Arriving a short distance from land, they held to the wind, tacked to port, and extended our line from north to south, cannonading it.

1. Southwood Bay is thirty leagues north of the mouth of the Thames.[34]

The surprised allies hastened to set sail. Some ships cut their cables; others left part of their boats ashore. The main body, which was under the direct orders of the Duke of York, and the rearguard, commanded by the Earl of Sandwich, took the starboard tack. Ruyter, with the first squadron, and one of his lieutenants, Admiral Van Gent, with the third, followed the movement of the English. The commander of the Dutch vanguard, Admiral Bankaert, continued his route south. He headed towards the French, who had taken the port tack as they sailed. As soon as he was within range, he opened fire on our vessels.

1. The composition of the French squadron was as follows: 1st Division. The *Illustre*, of sixty-four guns, Captain de Grancey; the *Téméraire*, of fifty-two guns, captain de Larson; the *Admirable*, of sixty-four guns, captain de Beaulieu; the *Terrible*, of seventy guns, mounted by Du Quesne, captain de Rosmadek; the *Conquérant*, of sixty-six guns, captain de Thiras; the *Hasardeux*, of thirty-four guns, captain de la Viergerie-Treslebois; the *Bourbon*, of forty-eight guns, captain de Querven; the *Alcyon*, of thirty-six guns, captain Bitant de Bléor; the *Prince*, of fifty guns, captain d'Amfreville; the *Vaillant*, of fifty-two guns, captain le chevalier de Nesmond. 2nd Division or center division. - The *Foudroyant*, of seventy guns, captain Jean Gabaret; the *Brave*, of forty-eight guns, captain de Valbelle; the *Aquilon*, of forty-eight guns, captain d'Hailly; the *Tonnant*, of sixty-four guns, captain of the Ardents; second captain, the Chevalier de Béthune; the *Saint-Philippe*, of seventy-six guns, mounted by the Count of Estrées, and of which de Cou was captain; the *Grand*, of sixty-four guns, captain Gombaud; the Duc, of forty-eight guns, captain the Chevalier de Sébeville; the *Éole*, of thirty-six guns, captain the Chevalier Cogolin de Guers; the *Oriflamme*, of fifty guns, captain de Kerjean-Lesmoüal; the *Excellent*, of sixty guns, captain of the Magnou; the *Arrogant*, of thirty-eight guns, captain de Villeneuve-Ferrières. 3rd Division. The *Fort*, of sixty guns, captain de Blénac; the *Rubis*, of forty-eight guns, captain Saint-Aubin d'Infreville; the *Galant*, of forty-four guns, captain the Chevalier de Flacourt; the *Sans-Pareil*, of sixty-four guns, captained by de la Clocheterie; the *Superbe*, of seventy guns, mounted by de Rabesnières-Treslebois, squadron leader, captained by de Thémine; the *Sage*, of fifty guns, captained by the Chevalier de Tourville; the *Hardi*, of thirty-two guns, captained by de la Roque; the Heureux, of forty-eight guns, captained by Pannetier; the *Invincible*, of sixty-four guns, captained by the Chevalier de Verdille. To these thirty vessels must be added eight fire ships and four frigates. All these vessels formed the vanguard of the Anglo-French Fleet.[35]

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Although he was to windward, and therefore free to choose the distance at which he wished to fight, he did not approach our line. The engagement between the Dutch, led by Admirals Ruyter and Gent, and the English was much more heated. The ships of the two nations mingled, and on both sides, there were ships completely disabled. The Duke of York, forced to abandon his ship, the *Royal Prince*, successively raised his flag on the *Saint-Michel* and the *London*. The *Royal Jacques*, a hundred-gun ship mounted by the Earl of Sandwich, commander of the third squadron, was set ablaze by a fireship. Ruyter's ship, the *United Provinces*, was badly damaged. In the evening, the Dutch held the wind and the firing ceased along the entire line. Admiral Bankaert set sail to rejoin the bulk of his fleet, and Count d'Estrées maneuvered to rally the Duke of York. A large number of English and French vessels, underpowered at the time of sailing, had played only an insignificant part in the battle. Some, due to their distance, had not fired a single cannon shot. After remaining face to face on June 8, the two armies separated. Ruyter returned to the Texel, and the Duke of York brought his ships back to English ports. Before attempting a new encounter, both fleets had to undergo extensive repairs.

Some writers have claimed that Louis XIV had ordered Vice-Admiral d'Estrées to spare his ships. If there is no other evidence to support this assertion than the conduct of our squadron, history must dismiss this accusation. With the winds blowing from the northeast, the combined fleet could not have formed up in line with their tacks to starboard immediately after setting sail.[1].

1. This is easily demonstrated. The fleet’s ships were bearing north and south, since this was the general direction of the anchorage. Now, by taking their tacks to starboard, they were steering north-northwest. Moreover, they could not sail for long at this heading without encountering land, the bearing of which, at this point, is roughly north and south. Most of the English vessels, once the matter had begun, were forced to change tack. The *Royal Prince*, of one hundred and ten guns, on which the Duke of York had his flag, was among the vessels which, shortly after setting sail, took tack to port to avoid running aground. This was one of the causes of the melee which took place between the English and the Dutch.[36]

The third squadron and those ships of the first that preceded the *Royal Prince* could, provided that the proximity of land permitted it, position themselves by an approaching movement ahead of this vessel. As for the ships of the first squadron that were astern of the *Royal Prince* and all those of the second, they were obliged to rise to windward to take up their positions. Finally, the difficulty of aligning themselves in the waters of the Commander-in-Chief was all the greater the further away the ships were. This was the case of the French squadron anchored in the south of the fleet.[1] Vice-Admiral d'Estrées took the port tack with the intention of tacking out to sea, then turning to join the Duke of York. The enemy did not give him time to execute this maneuver; he was attacked before he had changed tack. Once the matter had begun, Count d'Estrées no longer had freedom of movement. If the Dutch did not press him further, it is not he who should be held accountable. We have found nothing so far that gives us the right to say that the commander of our squadron received orders to spare his ships.[2]

1. As a consequence of this reasoning, we will say that, among the ships of the French squadron, those that must have encountered the most difficulty in taking up their positions were the ships of the first division, commanded by Du Quesne. Indeed, this division, forming the vanguard of our squadron, was to the south of the entire fleet.

2. Should we examine the hypothesis of an agreement between the governments of France and Holland, as a result of which Admiral Bankaert did not press us so vigorously? This does not seem very serious. It would have been necessary to put in the secret, besides Louis XIV, the Stadtholder and their ministers, Ruyter, his two squadron leaders, even division leaders, d'Estrées, his two lieutenants, Du Quesne and de Rabesnière-Treslebois. etc... Finally, do we believe that, under any government whatsoever, we find many generals willing to sacrifice their honor to the demands of politics?[37]

On the other hand, the French occupied the Dutch vanguard all day, which represented a third of the fleet of the States-General, just as the French squadron represented a third of the forces under the command of the Duke of York.[1] Consequently, each of the three squadrons of the combined army fought a number of enemies proportionate to its strength. How, then, can it be said that we allowed our allies to be crushed? The following passage, taken from the memoirs of the Duke of York, reports in a simple and truthful manner the part played by the French in the battle of June 7: ".... The Zeeland squadron, commanded by Bankaert, had to deal with the French squadron, commanded by Count d'Estrées. Both were steering south and tacked to port from the start of the battle, while the Duke and Earl of Sandwich were keeping as close to the wind as possible, tacks to starboard.... The French were steering south, tacked as close to the wind as they could have been.... But Bankaert and the Zealand squadron did not press them as hard as they could have, for they barely approached them to more than half cannon range, which did not a little diminish the reputation the Zealanders had acquired in the last two wars, of being the bravest among the Dutch sailors: thus these two squadrons suffered very little...."

Count d'Estrées wrote to the minister that several captains had not done everything in their power to approach the enemy. Among the officers he complained about was the commander of the First Division, Lieutenant General Du Quesne. Furthermore, it was learned in Paris that malicious rumors about our navy were circulating in England.

1. The combined army was, like the fleet of the States-General, divided into three squadrons: the vanguard, the main body, and the rearguard.[38]

Political figures, enemies of the French alliance, vigorously attacked the role played by our squadron. It was said that it had displayed no vigor in the engagement it had sustained against the Dutch. Some of its ships had not fired a single cannon shot, and others had fought from very far away. These accusations caused outrage at Versailles, and explanations were requested from the Count d'Estrées. The Marquis de Croissy, the French ambassador to London, was ordered to gather all information likely to enlighten the King on the conduct of the fleet's generals and captains. The ambassador hastened to Chatham, where our ships were anchored. He soon realized that he was entrusted with a difficult mission. The officers were divided into two camps, some supporting d'Estrées and the others supporting Du Quesne. The information he received was so contradictory that he was unable to discern the truth.[1] Vice-Admiral d'Estrées persisted in his initial complaints. He repeated to the minister that several vessels "had not kept their ranks properly and had not observed his maneuver exactly."

To fully understand the various incidents of June 7, as far as we are concerned, we must apply to the French squadron the reasoning we used above for the combined fleet. Close to the wind, on port tack, immediately after weighing anchor, Count d'Estrées's vessels were obliged, in order to get into line, to form up against the vessel with the most wind, that is, the *Téméraire*, leader of the first division.[2] However, the *Saint-Philippe*, flying the flag of the commander-in-chief, held the wind.

1. It must be recognized that, under these conditions and for a man unfamiliar with the navy, it was difficult to form a considered opinion on the role each had played in the battle of Southwood Bay.

2. The winds being northeasterly, the vessels, taking the closest tack to port, steered east-southeast. It will be recalled that the squadron was anchored on a line running north to south. We must add that the land would not have hindered the immediate formation of a line of battle, with the tacks to port, since the coast of England, at the level of Southwood, runs north and south.[39]

The ships to the north of this vessel could position themselves in its waters, letting the wind carry them, but those to the south were condemned to remain to leeward of the line until they had gained enough ground to the east to take up their positions. This explains why the main body and especially the rearguard, the latter commanded by Squadron Leader Rabesnière-Treslebois, took part in the combat immediately, while the vanguard did not arrive on the battlefield until the afternoon. This delay was the result of the sudden appearance of the Dutch and the maneuver of Count d'Estrées. The latter fought very bravely and approached the enemy as closely as he could. But his conduct was that of a captain and not an admiral. Instead of facilitating the formation of his squadron, he was concerned only with getting upwind. The disagreement between Du Quesne and d'Estrées reached such proportions that it was recognized in Paris that it was impossible to leave these two general officers in each other's presence. Colbert, who knew Du Quesne, did not believe that he had failed in his duty. On the other hand, Vice-Admiral d'Estrées had a very high position at court; moreover, his ship had fought well, and he himself had won the sympathies of the English officers. The King decided that Du Quesne would not be employed during the campaign of 1673. We have dwelt on the affair of Southwood Bay with the dual aim of combating a historical error and of showing the French navy at work, the first time it appeared on a major stage. Although the role of our squadron on June 7, 1672, was very much in the background, the mind remains struck by the importance of the results obtained by Colbert in a few years. We realize the considerable amount of effort that the arming of these thirty vessels and the composition of their staffs cost the great minister.[40]

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While Vice-Admiral d'Estrées lacked the necessary knowledge and experience to exercise this command, his lieutenants were Du Quesne and Squadron Leader de Rabesnière-Treslebois.[1] Alongside a few officers who had recently joined the navy and were not yet up to the task, there were captains named Tourville, des Ardents, and Gabaret.[2]

In 1673, the North Sea was the scene of renewed fighting between the allies and the Dutch. The two enemy fleets met on June 7 and 15, and on August 21. The battle of June 15 was a simple cannonade, but on August 21, the fighting was very serious. New, and one might say interminable, discussions arose at the end of the campaign. They were reminiscent of those of the previous year, and they were of no greater significance. On June 7, we had demonstrated a vigor to which the English paid tribute. On August 21, things did not go as well. That day, there had been no unity in the maneuvering of the Anglo-French fleet. Prince Rupert, who had replaced the Duke of York in command of the army, complained about his two lieutenants, Rear-Admiral Spragge and Count d'Estrées. These two general officers protested very vigorously against the reproaches leveled at them, and they, in turn, accused Prince Rupert of having maneuvered with his own squadron without regard for the other two.

1. We will not speak of Du Quesne, who, a few years later, took it upon himself to demonstrate his worth. We will only recall that in 1636, this great sailor was already in the state navy. He commanded a warship in the fleet of Bishop de Sourdis, who held him in particular esteem. Squadron Leader de Rabesnière-Treslebois was an old officer with an excellent reputation for professional ability and bravery. He died from a wound received in the battle of Southwood Bay.

2. Captain des Ardents was appointed squadron leader in place of M. de Rabesnière-Treslebois. Tourville, who was very young, could not yet claim this promotion. He was starting out as a ship captain.[41]

The Count d'Estrées also had run-ins with his own officers. In the report he sent to Paris on the battle of August 21, he very severely criticized the conduct of Lieutenant General Marquis de Martel. The latter had replaced Du Quesne in command of the squadron's first division. Less fortunate than his predecessor, the Marquis de Martel did not escape the loss of his command. He was imprisoned in the Bastille, where he remained until February of the following year. M. de Seuil, the naval intendant in Brest, received a mission similar to that which the French ambassador in London had received the previous year. He was charged with conducting an investigation into the battle of August 21. On November 23, he wrote to Colbert, "I cannot single out here those who have been appointed to me as being more capable of supporting and undertaking good deeds, because I have found enough contradictions to make me fear that they were spoken to me with passion, self-interest, or a spirit of conspiracy, so that it would be unsafe to believe them." This was the natural pitfall of this kind of information, having no basis other than private conversations or unofficial interrogations.

Moreover, to what competent judge should the conduct of the commander-in-chief and the disputes that arose between him and his lieutenants be submitted? Not only did Vice-Admiral d'Estrées have no superior in the navy apart from the minister, but he had no equal. Behind him came two lieutenant-generals and three squadron leaders. The first of these lieutenant-generals, Du Quesne, was in disgrace, and the second, the Marquis de Martel, was in prison. Finally, one of the three squadron leaders was under the direct orders of the Count d'Estrées. Colbert did not have regular means of information at his disposal. He had to, with the superior sense that distinguished him, see and judge everything.[1]

1. These considerations demonstrate the magnitude of the task Colbert had set himself, and the merit he had in accomplishing it. Furthermore, they allow us to say that the reports of the intendants, when they relate to purely maritime matters, must be subject to very careful examination. These documents retain a certain importance, but they should not be given too much authority.[42]

This state of affairs, moreover, was coming to an end. The time was not far off when the French navy would count in its ranks a large number of capable general officers and experienced captains.

The enemies of the French alliance having prevailed in the councils of King Charles II, England made peace with the United Provinces of the Netherlands. Our navy found itself alone in the presence of the united forces of Holland and Spain.[1]

M. de Vivonne, coming from Toulon, arrived with nine vessels at the entrance to the Strait of Messina when he was attacked on January 10, 1675, by twenty-nine Spanish vessels. The French squadron, joined by six vessels from Messina, forced the enemy to withdraw. One vessel, carrying forty-four cannons, remained in our hands.[2] Du Quesne defeated Ruyter on January 8 and April 22, 1676. The first of these encounters took place near the islands of Stromboli and Salini. The French had twenty-two ships, and the Dutch eighteen ships and nine galleys. Ruyter intended to prevent Du Quesne from joining the French forces anchored at Messina. After a very lively engagement that lasted all day, the Dutch allowed our squadron free passage.[3]

1. Hostilities at sea had not yet begun with Spain, but we had already been at war with that power for some time.

2. The Duke of Vivonne spoke highly of Du Quesne. He attributed to him the honor of the capture made by the French squadron.

3. A few days after the battle of January 8, the squadron had to endure bad weather. Several ships collided, and two vessels were forced, due to their damage, to separate from the fleet. Du Quesne wrote to the minister about this: "I will admit to you, Monseigneur, that the officers and captains, who have only served in the seas of the Levant, are not intelligent in observing the orders and signals of march and battle, as is proper, for lack of having practiced it, and even, for not having this experience, they have difficulty approving it, which we recognize to be the advantage the Dutch have over us in sailing almost at all times, especially in the presence of their enemies, night and day, in battle; that in this way, they avoid collisions between them, to which one is too prone among the King's ships. If His Majesty does me the honor of continuing my command in his armies, I am obliged to ask him for strong protection to reduce these officers and captains to the observation of this naval exercise, and even when it will be necessary to be at sea, in winter, in the presence of the enemy, to have the pleasure of me indicating the ships and captains suitable for such services; because often such a ship, even a single one which is bad at bowline, will force an army to lose the advantage of the wind or to abandon it; and, although in the large number of the King's ships, it cannot be avoided that there are some less good at sailing than others, they will not be useless if they are used for what they are suited to."[43]

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On April 22, we had thirty ships and nine fire ships. The enemy squadron consisted of seventeen Dutch ships, twelve Spanish ships, five fire ships, and nine galleys. The Dutch behaved with their usual firmness, but they received only mediocre support from the Spanish. In the evening, the enemy abandoned the battlefield and headed for Syracuse. The defeat the allies had just suffered was nothing compared to the immense loss that awaited them. Ruyter had received a wound from which he died on April 29. Command of the Spanish-Dutch fleet passed into the hands of the Spanish Admiral Don Diego de Ibarra.

The Duke of Vivonne left Messina on May 28 with twenty-nine ships, twenty-five galleys, and nine fire ships. On June 1st, the army arrived in sight of the Bay of Palermo, to which the allies had withdrawn. The enemy fleet, twenty-seven ships strong, was anchored in a semicircle, a short distance from land. Nineteen galleys were positioned on the wings or in the battlements.

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1. Ruyter died at the age of seventy. His body was transported to Holland and buried with great pomp in Rotterdam. Louis XIV had ordered that all French naval vessels, through which the ship carrying the remains of this great man passed, should salute with cannons. Similar instructions had been sent to the governors of the coastal towns.[44]

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The left was supported by the pier, at the end of which was placed a battery of ten cannons; the center was protected by the fortress of Castellamare, and the right by the city's fortifications. On the morning of June 2, the French squadron, favored by a nice northeast breeze, headed toward the enemy. A detachment of nine ships, to which the Duke of Vivonne had added nine galleys, was ordered to make a full-bore attack on the allied right wing.[1] This detachment, vigorously led by squadron leader Preuilly d'Humières, anchored on the buoys of the ships it was to fight. The action began, on both sides, with real ferocity. Aided by the offshore breeze, some fireship captains managed to hook several Dutch and Spanish vessels. These ships cut their cables to reach the coast. By drifting, they threw their army into disorder and confusion. The results of the day were disastrous for our adversaries. Seven ships and two galleys fell prey to the flames. The Spanish admirals Don Diego de Ibarra and Don Francisco Freire de la Cerda[2], and the Dutch rear admirals Jean de Haën and Middellandt lost their lives in this affair. The allies counted no fewer than 2,000 men, officers, sailors, and soldiers, killed or wounded. The Duke of Vivonne did not see fit to pursue this success. Although his squadron had not suffered, he returned to Messina.

The Treaty of Nijmegen, concluded in 1678, put an end to hostilities. In 1688, peace was once again broken with Holland.

1. It had been decided, in a council of war held on June 1st, that we would attack, with particular vigor, the right wing of the allies, in order to break their line at that point.

2. Admiral Don Francisco Freire de la Cerda, who commanded the Spanish squadron in the battle of April 22nd, had been replaced, by order of his Sovereign, by Don Diego de Ibarra. Instead of returning to Spain, he remained on the flagship to serve as a volunteer, thus showing that, although he was a mediocre general, he had the courage of a soldier.[45]

At the beginning of the following year, England and Spain having declared war on us, France found itself alone in the presence of the three great maritime powers of the time. On June 4, 1690, seventy vessels, carrying from fifty-two to one hundred and ten cannons, left Brest. The nation could rightly be proud of this fleet. Tourville commanded it. Under his command were Vice-Admiral Victor d'Estrées, Lieutenant-Generals de Villette-Mursay, de Chateaurenault, d'Amfreville, and Gabaret Louis, and Squadron Leaders de Relingue, de Langeron, de Nesmond, de Laporte, de Coetlogon, de Flacourt, and Pannetier. With the exception of Vice-Admiral Victor d'Estrées, who had recently joined the navy, all of these lieutenant-generals or squadron leaders had been fighting at sea for twenty-five years. The same was true of most of the ship captains. On June 10, Tourville defeated the Anglo-Dutch army, sixty ships strong, not far from Cape Beachy Head. The enemy lost three vessels; one of them surrendered to the *Souverain* and the other two were sunk. On September 12, the allies, actively pursued, sacrificed seven vessels which, due to their damage, remained behind. A few days later, six dismasted vessels were seen underwater. A French division having headed towards these vessels, they threw themselves ashore. Our Fleet, rallied by a squadron of galleys, appeared on August 1 off Torbay. A detachment of sailors and soldiers, placed under the command of Vice-Admiral d'Estrées, landed at Teignmouth. A battery defending the harbor was destroyed and twelve vessels captured. The French fleet anchored on August 17th in the Bertheaume harbor.

On May 29, 1692, the French navy fought the Battle of La Hogue. Obeying the King's orders to fight the enemy "whether strong or weak, and wherever he encountered them," Tourville attacked ninety-seven Anglo-Dutch vessels with forty-five ships. When the firing ceased, after a battle that had lasted no less than ten hours, the French fleet was intact.[46]

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The enemy had lost two ships; one had blown up and the other had sunk. The army headed for Brest, the only place where it could be safe, since we had no port in the Channel. Hampered by the calm and the currents, it made little progress during the day on the 30th. On the morning of the 31st, Tourville entered the Alderney Race, hoping to outpace the enemy, who were heading west by the north of the Casquets. Twenty ships had already passed through this difficult passage when, with the calm and the end of the ebb tide, fifteen ships, including the *Ambitieux*, which was aboard the commander-in-chief, were forced to anchor.[1] The anchors having drifted with the tide, this entire part of the squadron was driven back. Tourville was separated from his fleet and surrounded by superior forces. Recognizing the impossibility of saving his ships, he decided to throw them ashore. Fifteen vessels were set on fire, either by us or by the English, at Cherbourg and La Hogue. Such was the outcome of that disastrous day. James II had assured Louis XIV that part of the British fleet would fall under Tourville's flag as soon as the battle began. Our fleet had been at sea for several days when the King received news from London that no English officer would defect. Ponchartrain, who was then Minister of the Navy, hastened to dispatch, from various points along the coast, notices bearing dispatches ordering Tourville not to fight. None of the ships sent to search for him managed to reach him.[2].

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1. Tourville's ship, the *Soleil-Royal*, against which several enemy vessels had directed their attacks on May 29, was in a state of utter disrepair. Tourville had set his flag on the *Ambitieux*.

2. The Hogue incident was all the greater misfortune because no military reason, affecting our safety, compelled us to approach the enemy in the inferior position we found ourselves in on May 29. The ships that had fought that day did not represent the only force at France's disposal. Tourville could have waited, before putting to sea, for the reinforcements brought to him by Vice-Admiral d'Estrées and Lieutenant-Generals De Laporte and Chateaurenault. In this scenario, the enemy's numerical superiority would have been very slight. Commanded by Tourville and composed of very solid elements, our fleet would have gone to the enemy with great chances of success.[47]

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It has been said that the Battle of La Hogue brought about the ruin of our navy. It is enough to recall the strength of the squadrons put to sea the following year to demonstrate how unfounded this assertion is. In 1693, Tourville was at the head of a fleet of seventy-one vessels when, between Lagos and Cadiz, he intercepted a considerable convoy escorted by an Anglo-Dutch fleet. After this incident, he came to Toulon, where the squadron of the Count d'Estrées was stationed. The army assembled in the harbor numbered eighty vessels. What is true is that the year 1692, under the reign of Louis XIV, marked the high point of our maritime fortunes. From the Battle of La Hogue onward, the French navy declined. This state of affairs was not the consequence of our defeat, but the inevitable result of the financial situation. The country, exhausted of money, could no longer meet the expenses of the navy. From 1694 to 1697, the time when peace was signed, we remained on the defensive. At the beginning of the War of the Spanish Succession, France imposed the hardest sacrifices on itself to once again build up large-scale armaments. The Count of Toulouse, Admiral of France, appeared in 1704 in the Mediterranean with fifty ships of the line. On August 24, he attacked the Anglo-Dutch army commanded by Admiral Rook off the coast of Malaga. In this affair, we inflicted no serious losses on the enemy, but we forced them to abandon the battlefield to us. This return, to the prosperous times of the reign of Louis XIV, was the last.[48]

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The squadron warfare which had brought glory to the Tourvilles, the Du Quesnes, the Chateaurenaults, the Gabarets, the d'Amfrevilles, the Valbelles, the Coëtlogons, the Langerons and so many other distinguished officers, was followed by the privateering warfare illustrated by the exploits of the Duguay-Trouins, the Jean-Barts, the Nesmonds, the Pointis, the Ducasse and the Cassards.[49]

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BOOK II

Systematic abandonment of the navy under the Regency and during the ministry of Cardinal Fleury. - War breaks out between France and England. - Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, concluded in 1748. - New war with England, in 1756. - Treaty of Paris, signed on February 10, 1763. - Successive modifications made to maritime institutions. - General economy of the laws governing the navy, at the time of the outbreak of the American War of Independence.

The maritime establishment created by Louis XIV was systematically abandoned under the Regency and during the ministry of Cardinal Fleury. When the War of the Austrian Succession broke out, our navy was unable to resist England's naval forces. At the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, signed in 1748, we had only twenty-two ships of the line left. The government seemed to recognize the mistake it had made in departing from the traditions of Richelieu, Colbert, and Louis XIV. The ministry gave a more vigorous impetus to construction, and some armaments were ordered. These measures had not yet borne fruit when war broke out again between France and England. The advantage gained by the Marquis de la Galissonnière over Admiral Byng cast some light on the beginnings of the campaign, but the final outcome of the struggle could not be in doubt. Our inferiority condemned us fatally to defeat. The treaty of 1763 is one of the most unfortunate that our annals have had to record. France ceded to its rival Canada, Cape Breton Island, and all the islands and parts of the coast it occupied in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.[50]

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Not content with securing the present, the court of London wanted to fix the future by demanding that France renounce all claims to Acadia and Nova Scotia.[1] The Senegal River, our settlements on the west coast of Africa, Grenada, Saint Vincent, Dominica, and Tobago became the property of England. France returned all the conquests it had made in India since the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle. The English retook Minorca in exchange for Belle-Île, which they had seized on June 7, 1761. By virtue of a special convention, signed on the same day as the preliminaries of peace, France gave Louisiana to Spain. We wanted to compensate that power for the sacrifices it had been forced to make to bring about the end of hostilities. Spain had abandoned Florida and Pensacola[2] to England.

Supported by a strong tradition, a glorious memory of the reign of Louis XIV, the naval officers did not despair of the future. Instead of giving in to discouragement, they devoted themselves to study. It was thus that they maintained the position of the French navy, if not in terms of numbers, at least in terms of quality, at the same level as rival navies. There are few periods when scientific work applied to the navy has been as considerable as during the reign of Louis XV. The naval academy, founded in Brest in 1752, abandoned for a few years, and finally reorganized in 1769, played a very large part in this result.

1. The boundaries of the French and English possessions on the continent of North America were determined by a line running from the mouth of the Mississippi to the Iberville River and, from there, reaching the sea, passing through the middle of this river and Lakes Maurepas and Pont-Chartrain.

2. The treaty of offensive and defensive alliance, called the Family Pact, was signed between France and Spain on August 15, 1761. On January 2, 1762, Spain declared war on England. Hostilities between France and England began in 1756. We were powerless when Spain decided to join us.[51]

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The role of naval officers had changed successively since the beginning of the eighteenth century. While still military, it had become more maritime. The captain and officers were beginning to take on the place they occupy today on board ships. The art of navigation had made great progress. Bougainville's circumnavigation, the Verdun, La Crenne, Fleurieu, and Borda campaigns had aroused competition among officers and spread among them a taste for the knowledge necessary for navigating ships. Pilots, considered as officers of the road, had not yet disappeared, but their importance had been diminishing, while the status of captains and officers had steadily increased.[1] The institution of the Marine Guards, created by Colbert to ensure the recruitment of general staff, had been maintained. A new company, called the Flag Guards, had been formed in 1716. This company, whose personnel were drawn from the naval guards, had the primary mission of serving in the person of the Admiral of France, either in ports or at sea.[2] Bezout had been appointed naval examiner in 1763.

1. This was a far cry from the time when Colbert attributed the loss of the ships that had crashed onto the Aves Islands to the ignorance of pilots. In a letter he addressed to the Intendant de Seuil on this matter, the minister noted with regret that the most skilled pilots preferred to command merchant ships rather than serve on government vessels. Colbert did better, moreover, than complain about the poverty of the subjects; he recognized the need to improve the position of pilots, in order to attract the most capable to the service of the State.

2. A 1764 ordinance set at eighty the number of guards in each of the three companies of the naval guards and the company of the guards of the admiral's flag. The figure of 320, representing the total number of guards in the four companies, was too high, given the small number of vacancies that occurred each year in the ensigns. This number was reduced in 1773 to one hundred and sixty guards distributed as follows: eighty guards of the admiral's flag and eighty naval guards.[52]

At the request of the Duke of Choiseul, he composed a mathematics course containing all the knowledge that the guards needed to become ensigns.[1] The guards embarked whenever the needs of the service required it, and they resumed their studies when, following the decommissioning of their ships, they found themselves ashore again. This organization seemed to leave the task of instructing them to chance. It was unsuitable for a time when scientific progress made theoretical studies more necessary every day. M. de Boynes, who became Minister of the Navy in 1771, abolished the guards and founded a royal naval school in Le Havre.[2] His successor, M. de Sartines, did not dare to join this reform. He reestablished the institution of the guards, to which he made useful improvements.[3] He had the particular merit of regulating the time devoted to theoretical and practical studies better than his predecessors had done.

1. This Course of Mathematics comprised six volumes, one of which was devoted to astronomy and navigation.

2. A Royal Naval School shall be established in the port of Le Havre, to instruct and train, in both theory and practice, young men destined for the service of the sea, reserving to Himself, His Majesty, the right to establish, in the future, a similar establishment in one of the ports of the Mediterranean. Those admitted shall bear the title of students of the Royal Naval School; their number shall be eighty paid, His Majesty reserving to Himself the right to receive a greater number unpaid. No aspirant may be admitted unless he is fourteen years old, knows how to write correctly, and knows the basic rules of arithmetic. The students shall have no rank among themselves. Each school shall be commanded by a ship captain; ship lieutenants and masters shall be attached to it. The students will be trained, for three or four summer months, in seafaring practice on specially armed corvettes. Those who have passed the required examinations will be destined to enter the eight brigades or regiments of the Royal Marine Corps.

3. Abolishes, His Majesty, the Royal Marine Schools created by the ordinance of August 29, 1773, requiring that the students of the school established in Le Havre be admitted and received as aspirants of the Marine Guards and, consequently, distributed among the three ports of Brest, Toulon, and Rochefort (ordinance of March 2, 1775). The same ordinance set the strength of the companies of the Marine Guards at fifty and the number of flag guards at eighty. It created aspirants of the guards placed after the companies. The young men thus designated were called upon to fill any vacancies that arose. Students from the naval school in Le Havre became aspiring guards.[53]

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The successive ministers of the Navy after the War of 1756 did not only focus their attention on the naval officer corps. They reorganized the Naval Commissariat and the Health Service. An ordinance of March 25, 1765, created the Corps of Engineers-Construction.[1] The government established a special school in Paris, under the direction of Bezout and Duhamel du Monceau, to train engineering students.

In 1761, the Duke of Choiseul headed both the War and the Navy departments. He decided that artillery service on board ships would be handled by the land artillery.[2] At the same time, army regiments provided the personnel for the garrisons of warships. In 1774, M. de Sartines formed one hundred free companies divided into three divisions, the first in Toulon, the second in Rochefort, and the third in Brest. These divisions together were referred to as the Royal Marine Infantry Corps. The companies, each one hundred and eighteen men strong, were led by three officers, a lieutenant, and two ensigns. The Royal Marine Infantry Corps belonged to the sailing personnel. A detachment of this force embarked, in a proportion determined by the regulations, on each of our ships. The soldiers arrived on board knowing how to handle a rifle and how to fire a cannon.

1. His Majesty having been presented with the articles of the ordinance of April 15, 1689, which relate to the constructions and master carpenters maintained who, under this title, were then charged with the functions of the current builders of his vessels, and having considered that the latter, since their establishment in his ports, having particularly applied themselves to gathering all the theoretical and practical knowledge required for the construction of vessels, have made considerable progress there; wishing to stimulate more and more the study of the sciences which form the basis of this art, and to establish the status and functions of those who exercise it in a manner which corresponds to the usefulness of their services, He has ordered and orders the following: "His Majesty's shipbuilders will, in the future, be called engineer-builders of the navy. Ordinance of March 25, 1762." Signed: Choiseul.,

2. The personnel of the land artillery was increased by three brigades. With a few exceptions made for land artillery officers, naval officers were called upon to compose the staff of the newly formed brigades. The land artillery officers, who were admitted to the brigades intended for naval artillery service, exchanged the ranks they held for the equivalent rank in the naval officer corps. Each brigade was composed of seven companies of gunners and one company of bombardiers. The strength of the three brigades was 2,824 men.[54]

They stood watch like the sailors and assisted with maneuvers. These men constituted a very solid element in the composition of the crews. [1]

A royal ordinance of December 26, 1774, reestablished a company of bombardiers in each of the ports of Brest, Rochefort, and Toulon. These companies were commanded by four naval officers, two lieutenants, and two ensigns. They were composed of sailors of the classes, aged eighteen to thirty, who had demonstrated professional ability at sea. The bombardiers were called upon to serve on bomb galliots and on ships. Companies of apprentice gunners of the classes were formed in the ports of Toulon and Rochefort. The same ordinance allowed the minister to increase their number whenever the needs of the service required it. The Navy Department returned to the regime created by Colbert. [2] It was glorious for the memory of the great minister that it was deemed necessary, after so much trial and error and hesitation, to conform to the provisions he himself had adopted.

1. The Royal Marine Infantry Corps of 1774 had nothing in common with the Marine Infantry as it exists today. The latter was created for the sole purpose of garrisoning the colonies. Because of this purpose, it was placed under the direction of the Minister of the Navy. It is an infantry corps that has fought valiantly in all parts of the world, and which acquired a legitimate reputation through its conduct during the War of 1870; but this troop has always been, and still is, completely foreign to the service of the fleet.

2. Mr. de Sartines returned to the provisions of the ordinance of 1766. This was, as far as the service of artillery on the ships of the fleet was concerned, only the reproduction of the ordinance of 1689. The latter, as we have already said, had appeared under the Marquis de Seignelay, but, in reality, it was the work of Colbert.[55]

55

It remains for us to briefly outline the successive changes made to the organization of the arsenals. When Colbert took charge of naval affairs, he sought out collaborators around him. After choosing a few men of recognized merit, he assigned each of them an arsenal to direct under his immediate supervision. He had the right to count on the obedience and devotion of these officials. This would probably not have been the case if the leading figures of the naval army had been placed in charge of the arsenals. Besides the fact that Colbert had difficulty obtaining general officers, belonging to the highest nobility, to agree to reside for a significant period in Brest, Toulon, or Rochefort, he feared that he would not encounter among them the punctual obedience necessary for the execution of his plans. Finally, he feared the influence of men who, by their position at court, could have thwarted his plans. We must therefore believe that he systematically excluded military officers from the port service. Years passed, and these arrangements, which had been justified, no longer met the needs. Not all naval officers lived at Versailles, and a large number of them requested that their experience be put to good use in the preparation of our naval forces. In 1765, the Duke of Choiseul satisfied this feeling. He did not touch the general economy of the ordinance of 1689, but he increased the attributions of military officers. The movements of the port were placed under the orders of the commander of the navy. The latter also had the right to supervise the work carried out in the arsenal. We will not speak of the changes introduced in the port service, in 1772 and 1773, by M. de Boynes. What this minister did disappeared the day he ceased his functions. M. de Sartines provisionally reinstated the regime of 1765.[56]

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An ordinance dated September 23, 1776, considerably expanded the functions of naval commanders. Procurement, supplies, the distribution of materials, their storage in stores, reviews and the pay of officers, troops, and seamen, maritime registration, hospitals, and galleys remained in the hands of the intendant. The responsibilities of the naval commander included, in addition to guarding the arsenals and commanding the troops, the direction of port movements, construction, and artillery, all three of which were under the direct and immediate authority of a squadron leader, holding the title of director general.[1] Such, from the point of view of personnel, administration, and the service of the arsenals, was the general structure of the laws governing the navy in 1778, that is, at the time of the outbreak of the American War of Independence.

1. The constructions, armaments, disarmaments, repairs, dry docks, works (whatever their nature), carried out in the workshops of the arsenal, the guard and the conservation of the buildings, were placed under the authority of the commander of the navy. A general director, taken from among the squadron leaders, was placed at the head of the three directorates of the arsenal, the movements of the port, the works and the artillery. This general director was himself under the orders of the commander of the navy. Each of the directorates that we have just indicated was directed by a ship captain, having in his service lieutenants and ensigns of the ship.[57]

HISTORY
OF THE
FRENCH NAVY

BOOK I

From The Treaty of Paris establishes Great Britain's maritime supremacy. Disputes between the North American colonies and the mother country. - Stamp duty. - Tea tax. - Boston disturbances. - Repressive measures taken by the British government. - Deputies appointed by the provincial assemblies form a congress which meets in Philadelphia in September 1774. - Battle of Lexington, April 19, 1775. - Solemn Declaration of Independence of the Anglo-American colonies, July 4, 1776. - The French government follows with particular attention the events taking place on the other side of the Atlantic. - Relations of the Versailles cabinet with the insurgents. - Arrival in Paris of three commissioners sent by Congress. - On February 6, 1778, France signed a treaty of friendship and commerce with the United States and a possible treaty of alliance. - The court of London recalled its ambassador. - Maritime preparations were made on both sides of the strait. - Departure of the Count d'Estaing. - Mission entrusted Combat to this general officer. - Attempts were made at the court of Spain to persuade it to conclude an offensive and defensive alliance treaty with France. - Relations between the navies of France and England. - Capture of the frigates *Licorne* and *Pallas* and the lugger *Coureur*. - Capture of the frigates *Belle-Poule* and *Arethusa*. - As a result of the indecisive attitude adopted by the French government, the Brest squadron was ordered to sail.

I

The Treaty of Paris, concluded in 1763 between France and Great Britain, confirmed, in the eyes of Europe, the maritime supremacy of our rival.[58]

However, the American War of Independence, which allowed us, twenty years later, to take our revenge, was the consequence of the successes achieved by our adversaries during the campaign of 1756. The English, long pursued by the desire to remain sole masters of the northern part of the American continent, had seized the moment when the state of our navy prevented us from any serious struggle to attack us. They had achieved the goal they had set for themselves; but, the day after their victory, they encountered difficulties they had not foreseen, although they were inherent in their new situation. The American colonists, descended for the most part from families who had expatriated following religious or political persecution, could not have had a very deep devotion to the crown of England. The occupation of Canada by the French and of Florida by the Spanish gave the sovereignty of Great Britain a character of necessity that was imposed on the inhabitants. They recognized that they owed the mother country for the security they enjoyed. Thus, the disputes that arose between the Anglo-Americans and the British government, and these disputes were frequent, were easily resolved. The cession of Canada and Florida changed this state of affairs. England found itself in the presence of a numerous, energetic population, established on fertile soil, and to whom its support was no longer indispensable. Under the conditions created by the treaty of 1763, the government of the American colonies required extreme skill and great consideration.

The legislation that regulated Great Britain's commercial relations with its colonies assured the merchants of the mother country excessive profits. The Americans bowed before the omnipotence that the English Parliament had arrogated to itself in this matter.[59]

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The losses they suffered were, in their eyes, the equivalent of the taxes paid by the inhabitants of the British Isles to meet public expenses. While they demanded no relief from the burdens weighing on them, they were unwilling to bear new ones. During the war, Great Britain had increased its debt considerably. When peace was concluded, the government found it equitable to ask the American colonies for some sacrifices in exchange for the advantages they had derived from the Treaty of Paris. In 1763, the House of Commons voted, on the ministers' proposal, for the stamp tax. This news aroused widespread protests on the other side of the Atlantic. The provincial assemblies declared illegal and unconstitutional any tax or duty imposed by the British Parliament, in which the Americans had no representatives. This opposition movement was all the more marked because, for a year, the colonists, warned of the ministry's plans, had been preparing for resistance. The unanimity with which the new tax was rejected by all classes of the population alarmed the ministers. Convinced that they would be obliged to resort to force if they wanted to put the law into effect, they themselves demanded its repeal. The House of Commons consented, but it very clearly affirmed its sovereignty by declaring "that the colonies were in absolute dependence on the Crown and Parliament of Great Britain, which possessed the necessary authority to make laws which the colonies were bound to obey in all circumstances and in all possible cases." The struggle was adjourned until the time when England believed the time had come to apply this principle. Two years passed, during which no cause of serious disagreement arose between the colonies and the mother country. In the course of the year 1767, the government decided, with the authorization of the Chambers, that a tax should be levied on certain goods imported from England to America, such as tea, glass, paper, lead, cardboard and colors.[60]

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This provision was very poorly received by the colonists, who could only see the new taxes as a disguised tax. By common accord, they resolved to no longer use goods whose entry was subject to a duty. On the proposal of Lord North, who had become Prime Minister in 1770, Parliament abolished all taxes except the one imposed on tea. It was an illusion to believe that this concession would restore calm. By allowing the tea tax to remain, the Minister maintained intact the right of the Crown and Parliament to impose taxes. However, it was this right that the Americans were protesting against, whatever name it took and whatever form it took.

The Virginia assembly, deliberating in 1765 on the stamp tax, had adopted, on the proposal of Jefferson, who was later president of the republic, the following resolution: "This assembly alone possesses the necessary authority to impose taxes in this colony. Any person or body, other than the said general assembly, which should attempt to exercise this power, would violate both British and American liberties." This resolution faithfully expressed the opinion of the great majority of the American people in the question imprudently raised by England. Whether the colonists had sacrificed their habits for the love of independence, or whether the smugglers had introduced the tea necessary for consumption, the new tax brought nothing into the treasury. The government concealed its discontent, and some years passed during which tranquility was not disturbed. In 1773, the arrival in Boston of three ships laden with tea caused a riot to break out in the city. The crowd rushed aboard these three ships, whose cargo was thrown into the sea.[61]

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Since the beginning of the crisis we have just briefly outlined, the ministers of Great Britain had shown themselves to be inferior to their task. Shying away from the use of force to overcome American resistance, lacking sincerity and frankness when making concessions, they had been unable to be, at the right time, either energetic or conciliatory. Through its lack of foresight, the government of Great Britain had itself brought matters to the point they had reached. Upon learning of what had happened in Boston, the Crown and Parliament, encouraged, it must be said, by general opinion, prepared to act vigorously. It was forbidden to load or unload merchandise on the docks of the city of Boston. The port was closed, and the customs office was ordered to go to Salem. The charter of the State of Massachusetts was suspended (Boston is the capital of this state), and all powers passed into the hands of the representative of the royal authority. Finally, troops, commanded by General Gage, were charged with ensuring the execution of these measures. The entire American population had not yet seriously considered the possibility of breaking the link that bound the colonies to the mother country. The decisions of the British Parliament pushed minds in this direction. The Americans were left with only two choices: armed resistance or complete submission. If the ministers could suppress the charter of the State of Massachusetts with impunity, it was no longer only their money, but their liberty that was threatened. A congress, composed of deputies appointed by the several states, met at Philadelphia in September 1774. This assembly, after protesting against the illegality of the treatment inflicted on the city of Boston and the state of Massachusetts, declared that it was the duty of American citizens to repel force with force. These counsels were heard, and the provincial militias took up arms.[62]

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The first encounter between royal troops and the insurgents took place on April 19, 1775. There was a munitions and military supply depot in Concord, a small town twenty miles from Boston. A detachment sent by General Gage to destroy it was returning home after completing its mission when it was attacked near the town of Lexington. The English, harassed by their adversaries even within the walls of Boston, suffered very serious losses. On July 4, 1776, Congress solemnly declared the independence of the Anglo-American colonies. The thirteen states, including New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, formed a confederation that took the name of the United States of America.

II

The Duke of Choiseul, who had taken over from Berryer as Minister of the Navy in 1761, possessed a profound sense of national honor. He had negotiated the treaty of 1763, together with his cousin, the Count of Choiseul-Praslin, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, with the hope that France, better governed, would one day be able to avenge the humiliation it had been forced to endure. No sooner had peace been concluded than he worked ardently to restore the navy from its degradation. The time was right to attempt once again to reestablish our naval power. Maritime commerce had developed very greatly since the beginning of the eighteenth century. The loss of the colonies ceded to England under the Treaty of Paris had damaged many interests. A very marked reaction took place in favor of the military navy, the necessity of which the country, enlightened by events, better understood.[63]

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Already in 1762, in a surge of patriotism, the city of Paris, the States of Languedoc, Burgundy, Flanders, and Artois, the parliament and city of Bordeaux, the army, the Order of the Holy Spirit, the corporation of merchants of Paris, the trade of Marseille, the receivers and tax farmers had donated to the State the funds necessary for the construction of fifteen ships of the line. The Duke of Choiseul, who was, if not the prime minister, at least the leading figure in the cabinet, granted the Department of the Navy the necessary credits to push ahead with construction and fill our stores. In 1766, he and his cousin, the Duke of Choiseul-Praslin, exchanged the Department of the Navy for that of Foreign Affairs. The new minister brought the same zeal and ardor as his relative to the direction of maritime affairs. When, at the end of 1770, an undeserved disgrace due to unworthy motives deprived them both of the patriotic work they were pursuing, France possessed sixty-four ships of the line, fifty frigates or large corvettes, and fifty vessels of a lower rank.[1] The port of Lorient and the equipment of the compagnie des Indes had become the property of the State. As long as he retained power, the Duke of Choiseul followed with the greatest attention what was happening on the other side of the Atlantic. He foresaw the insurrection of the English colonies, and he was convinced that this event would provide France with the opportunity to repair the misfortunes of the last war. M. de Vergennes, who had become Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1774, sent an agent to America charged, although he had no official character, with entering into relations with the most important members of Congress. At the end of 1775, the colonists sent a request for aid to France through this agent.

1. These vessels would later be found in the squadrons of the American War of Independence.[64]

Louis XVI was very undecided regarding the line of conduct his government should adopt. Turgot, who was then Minister of Finance, insisted in the council that France observe the strictest neutrality. He considered it in our interests for England to triumph over the resistance of the insurgents. If the colonies emerged exhausted from the struggle, they would be unable, for a considerable time, to provide any assistance to the mother country. In the event that, after their submission, they retained some vigor, the English, fearing a new uprising, would maintain considerable forces in America. In either hypothesis, British power would be diminished, without this result having cost us any sacrifice. "In reviewing with Count de Vergennes," Turgol said in a memorandum dated April 1776, "the various ways in which one might suppose that England's quarrel with its colonies would end, it seemed to me that the most desirable event, for the interests of both Crowns, would be for England to overcome the resistance of its colonies and force them to submit to its yoke."[1]

1. This memorandum is entitled: Reflections written on the occasion of the memorandum submitted by Count de Vergennes on the manner in which France and Spain should consider the consequences of the quarrel against Great Britain and its colonies. The embarrassed situation of our finances is clearly indicated in a passage of the same memorandum. The very precise information it contains is of particular importance not only for the history of this war, but also for subsequent events. This is why we transcribe it below: "The King," said Turgot, "knows the situation of his finances. He knows that, despite the savings and improvements already made since the beginning of his reign, there is a difference of 20 million between the receipts and the expenditure, which the expenditure exceeds. In truth, in the expenditure are included the assigned reimbursements, but which the King cannot fail to make without damaging public faith and credit. There are only three ways to fill this deficit: an increase in taxes, a more or less severe bankruptcy, more or less disguised, and a considerable economy either in expenses or in the costs of collection. The goodness of the King, his justice, the care of his glory made him, from the first moment, reject the means of bankruptcy at all times and that of a tax increase during peace. The path of economy is possible; all that is required for this is a firm will. The first economy must be that of expenditure, because it alone can establish public confidence, and because public confidence is necessary to find gains in the financial sector by repaying excessively onerous commitments, which can only be done by borrowing from more advantageous sources. At the same time that the King found his finances burdened and in disorder, he found his military and his navy in a state of weakness that one would have had difficulty imagining. To restore them and give France the degree of strength and consideration that it should have, the King must spend, when the state of his finances prescribes that he save. Our state, nevertheless, is not so desperate that, if it were absolutely necessary to support a war, resources would not be found, especially if it were with a probability of success that could shorten its duration. But at least we must admit that we must avoid it as the greatest of misfortunes, since it would make impossible, for a long time and perhaps forever, a reform absolutely necessary for the prosperity of the State and the relief of the people. By making premature use of our strength, we would risk perpetuating our weakness.[65]

The Minister of Foreign Affairs was far from sharing Turgot's opinion. He would not accept that France should remain a mere spectator of the troubles agitating the English colonies, and neglect the opportunity that presented itself to weaken its rival. M. de Vergennes believed that one would need great illusions to believe in the possibility of preserving peace. If war was certain, it was good policy to secure allies in advance. Since a break with England seemed premature to him, he was of the opinion that the Versailles cabinet should continue to live on good terms with the court of London. On the other hand, he proposed giving encouragement to the insurgents and secretly sending them aid. If the situation were to change, the French government would adapt its conduct to events. M. de Vergennes's ideas prevailed in the council, and the King gave them his approval. Frankness and sincerity are as necessary in international relations as in relations between individuals. Therefore, we must disapprove of the means that Mr. de Vergennes recommended. But it is worth noting that the English had no criticism to make of us on this point.[66]

66

In June 1755, Admiral Boscawen attacked Admiral Dubois de la Motte's squadron with superior forces and captured two sixty-four-gun ships, the *Lys* and *Alcide*. At the same time, British cruisers and privateers captured 250 merchant ships. While these events were taking place, the court in London seemed to be taking seriously the negotiations initiated with the Versailles cabinet to reach an amicable settlement of the difficulties that had arisen between the governors of the English and French colonies in North America. In 1768, the Republic of Genoa had ceded to France the island of Corsica, the main parts of which we had occupied since 1764. England had not opposed the execution of our treaty with the Republic, but it had provided money and weapons to General Paoli, who refused to recognize our sovereignty. Finally, we knew that very active steps were being taken to bring about an agreement between England and America. The two countries would have united to wage war against us, and the independence of the American colonies would have been the price of this alliance. This project was supported in London by political figures enjoying great influence on both sides of the Atlantic.

After the solemn declaration of July 4, 1776, Congress had decided to send commissioners to some of the courts of Europe to plead the cause of the United States. The famous Franklin, Messrs. Silas Deane and Lee, designated to go to France, found a very warm welcome in Paris. M. de Vergennes did not receive them officially, but he immediately entered into contact with them.

The Versailles cabinet did not believe that the time had come to depart from the line of conduct it had adopted. He sent weapons, munitions and money to the insurgents through trade.[67]

67

In our ports, customs officials turned a blind eye to shipments of war material made by our merchants, whether for their own account or that of the insurgents. We must hasten to add that the court in London, despite the most formal prohibitions, could not prevent English shipowners from carrying out the same kind of operations. The catastrophe of General Burgoyne[1], defeated at Saratoga on October 7, 1777, and forced to lay down his arms a few days later, precipitated events. All the powers of Europe believed in the triumph of the American insurrection. Within the British Parliament, voices were raised to urge the government not to continue a struggle fraught with peril. Franklin and his colleagues, skillfully seizing the favorable moment, pressed Mr. de Vergennes to obtain a categorical response to the requests for assistance they had addressed to him. The Versailles cabinet, however much it might desire to temporize, could not escape the necessity of taking a stand. The cause of the United States had aroused a very sincere enthusiasm in all ranks of French society. The nation had, moreover, the presentiment that the insurrection of the English colonies would allow it to tear up the treaties of 1763, of which it retained the most bitter memory. The government could hardly resist this double current of opinion. The King, who felt very hesitant to engage in this war, overcame his last scruples and authorized his Minister of Foreign Affairs to begin negotiations with the envoys of Congress. On February 6, 1778, a treaty of commerce and friendship was concluded in Paris between the United States and France. This diplomatic act constituted, on the part of the Versailles cabinet, the implicit recognition of American independence.

1. Burgoyne's disaster at Saratoga was known in Paris in the first days of December.[68]

There was no doubt that war with England would be the consequence of our conduct. In anticipation of this event, the French and American plenipotentiaries signed a second treaty, which was kept provisionally secret. "His Most Christian Majesty and the United States of America," it was said in the preamble, "having concluded today a treaty of friendship and commerce, for the mutual advantage of their subjects and citizens, have deemed it necessary to take into consideration the means of strengthening these engagements, and of making them useful to the security and tranquility of both parties, especially in the case that Great Britain, through resentment of this liaison and good correspondence, which is the object of the said treaty, should break the peace with France, either by direct hostilities, or by impeding its commerce and navigation, in a manner contrary to the law of nations or to the treaties which subsist between the two crowns: and His Majesty and the said United States have resolved to join in this case their projects and their efforts against the enterprises of their common enemy."[1] If this last hypothesis were to come true, we took the commitment not to lay down arms before England had recognized the independence of America. After the conclusion of these two treaties, the King received Franklin as the official representative of the United States.

1. We give below the most interesting articles of this treaty:

ART. 2. The essential and direct object of the present defensive alliance is to effectually maintain the liberty, sovereignty, and absolute and unlimited independence of the said United States, both in the nature of government and commerce.

ART. 6. His most Christian Majesty renounces forever the possession of the islands of Bermuda, as well as that of any part of the continent of North America which, before the treaty, was acknowledged to belong to the Crown of Great Britain or to the United States, heretofore called British colonies, or which is now or has been lately under the power of the King and Crown of Great Britain.

ART. 8. Neither party shall conclude peace or truce with Great Britain without first obtaining the formal consent of the other, and they mutually engage not to lay down their arms until the independence of the United States shall be secured, formally or tacitly, by the treaty or treaties which shall terminate the war.[69]

Without waiting for England's requests for explanations, the French government ordered the Marquis de Noailles, our ambassador to King George, to notify the Cabinet of Saint-James of the treaty of commerce and friendship concluded on February 6, 1778. The court of London, as one might expect, responded to this communication by recalling its ambassador. Although determined, from that day on, to wage war against us, England concealed her resentment. Before pushing matters further, she wanted to ensure the return of her merchant fleets. The personnel manning them were necessary to train the crews of the numerous vessels she possessed in her arsenals. Two squadrons were armed, one at Portsmouth, commanded by Admiral Keppel, and the other at Plymouth, under the command of Admiral Byron. The order was sent to India, via Suez, to attack us without delay. These arrangements made, the Saint-James cabinet resolved to wait for the moment it deemed most favorable to begin hostilities in Europe.

Since the beginning of this crisis, we had not appreciably increased the forces we maintained during the peace period. The threatening attitude of England, following the recall of its ambassador, modified the cautious attitude of our government. In addition to the frigates and other lower-ranking vessels intended to protect our trade, the ministry prepared two squadrons, one at Toulon, under the command of Lieutenant General d'Estaing, the other at Brest, commanded by Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers. Some troops, food, and equipment were sent to the colonies. On April 13, 1778, Count d'Estaing set sail with the ships *Languedoc* of ninety, *Tonnant* of eighty, *César, Hector, Zélé, Guerrier, Marseillais* and *Protecteur*, of seventy-four, *Vaillant, Provence* and *Fantasque*, of sixty-four, and *Sagittaire* of fifty.[70]

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These ships were commanded by ship captains de Boulainvilliers, de Bruyères, de Raymondis, de Barras Saint-Laurent, Moriès-Castellet, de Bougainville, Lapoype-Vertrieux, d'Apchon, de Chabert, de Champorcin, Commander de Suffren, and d'Albert de Rions. Squadron leaders de Broves and de Breugnon had their flags flying on the ships *César* and *Tonnant*, and Lieutenant General d'Estaing was sailing on the *Languedoc*. The French government had deliberately spread the rumor that this squadron was heading for Brest. In reality, it was heading for the coast of North America. Mr. Gérard, appointed Minister Plenipotentiary of the Court of France to the United States Congress, and one of the American envoys, Silas Deane, had taken passage on the flagship. Each of them had concealed his name and position until all communication with the land had been interrupted. We knew that the English had twelve vessels on the coasts of North America, six of sixty-four and six of fifty. Admiral Howe was anchored, with nine vessels, at the mouth of the Delaware. It was hoped in Paris that d'Estaing would surprise this squadron and destroy it. In this event, General Clinton, who occupied Philadelphia, caught between the French fleet and the American army, would have been forced to capitulate. If, upon our arrival on the coasts of America, the English were no longer at the mouth of the Delaware, Count d'Estaing was ordered to attack them wherever he could do so with advantage. The government allowed this general officer a great deal of freedom of action, but it intended that he should take advantage of his superiority to attempt some glorious enterprise for our arms and useful to our allies. In the event that Admiral Howe received reinforcements considerable enough to place us in a position of marked inferiority, we were to withdraw to Boston, and from there make for the Caribbean Sea.[71]

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The Versailles cabinet was actively lobbying the court of Madrid to conclude a treaty of offensive and defensive alliance with France. Louis XVI, joining his efforts with those of his ministers, wrote several very urgent letters to King Charles III to persuade him to follow our policy. It seemed natural that Spain would take advantage of the Anglo-American conflict to repair the losses it had suffered during the last war. But this power, master of vast territories located outside Europe, viewed the uprising in the English colonies with more concern than satisfaction. Although it had a particular interest in the weakening of the British Empire, it deemed it impolitic to pursue this goal by making common cause with rebels. It wanted to interpose itself between France and England, but since the Saint-James cabinet had set the withdrawal of the note of March 13 [1] as a precondition for any negotiations, Spain's goodwill remained in vain. While the three powers were carrying out a useless exchange of diplomatic notes, our relations with England were heralding a very imminent breakdown. Numerous complaints were being raised in our commercial ports against the actions of the British navy. Merchant ships, arrested contrary to international law, had been brought into English ports, and we demanded their return in vain. Our officers encountered English warships every day on our coasts or in the English Channel. When the cruisers of the two nations passed within a short distance of each other, the crews were at their battle stations and ready to open fire. [2] England took it upon itself to resolve this situation.

1. It was after the delivery of this note by the Marquis de Noailles that England recalled its ambassador.

2. The following will give an accurate idea of the relations between the two navies. La Pérouse, then a lieutenant, was cruising in the English Channel with a corvette he commanded, and was chased by four ships. He continued on his way, as prescribed by his instructions. A few hours later, he was joined by two corvettes and two sloops. One of the corvettes hailed him and asked where he came from and where he was going: after saying that he came from Brest and was going to sea, he asked the same question to the officer who had called him. The latter replied that he came from Plymouth, and then the English ships moved away. "We had made," La Pérouse adds in his report, "our preparations for combat, but we exchanged courtesies as we parted." Letter from La Pérouse to the minister dated March 25, 1778. In the Caribbean Sea, the facts were more serious. The British cruisers pursued the American ships into the bays and coves of the French islands. When these events occurred in the vicinity of a shore battery, our gunners immediately opened fire on the English.[72]

III

The frigates *La Belle-Poule* and *La Licorne*, the corvette *L'Hirondelle*, and the lugger *Le Coureur* left Brest on June 15, 1778. These vessels, under the command of the captain of La Belle-Poule, Lieutenant Chadeau de la Clocheterie, were sent on a cruise to the entrance to the English Channel. On the morning of the 17th, this division was steaming, tack to port, with a west-southwest breeze, when it came within sight of an English squadron. Although war had not been declared, M. de la Clocheterie thought it prudent to take the tack that would take him to Ushant. The English were following the same route, and some of their vessels quickly closed in on ours. The division commander gave the *Hirondelle* and the *Licorne* freedom of maneuver, in order to allow these two ships to move away at the most favorable speed for their progress. Having noticed that a cutter and a frigate had taken the lead of the chasers, he kept the lugger the *Coureur* with him. In the afternoon, the *Licorne*, commanded by M. de Belizal, lieutenant of the ship, was joined by a frigate closely followed by a two-decker ship. The captain of the *Licorne*, informed by the English frigate that the commander-in-chief of the British squadron was asking him to pass aft of his ship, headed for the *Victory*, on board which was flying the flag of Vice-Admiral Keppel.[73]

73

At six thirty in the evening, the frigate *Arethusa*, Captain Marshall, was a short distance off the leeward quarter of the *Belle-Poule*. Having reached within earshot, the English captain politely invited the officer commanding the French frigate to come to Admiral Keppel. M. de la Clocheterie first maneuvered to deprive the *Arethusa* of the advantage of the position she had taken. When he had positioned himself abeam of her, he informed Captain Marshall of his firm determination not to deviate from her course. The *Arethusa* having fired her broadside, he immediately returned fire, and a very lively fight ensued between the two vessels, within sight of the English squadron, which was still a few leagues astern. The two frigates were running broadside, with a light westerly breeze carrying them to the coast of Brittany. Around eleven-thirty, the masts and sails of the *Arethusa* were in the greatest disorder. Fearing that if he delayed any longer, he would be unable to withdraw from the fire, Captain Marshall maneuvered to rally his squadron. M. de la Clocheterie did not pursue the *Arethusa*, which would have brought him under the volley of English vessels. He continued on his way, and at midnight, he anchored in the cove of Camplouis, on the coast of Plouescat. The *Alert*, that was the name of the English cutter, and the French lugger had not remained mere spectators of the engagement between the two frigates.

1. The frigate *Arethusa* was to have a more unfortunate fate nine months later. On March 10, 1779, at nightfall and in rather bad weather, M. de la Bretonnière, commanding the frigate *l'Aigrette*, which was very close to the entrance to Brest, since it was inside the black stones, was very surprised to recognize, in a building in sight at a short distance, an enemy frigate that he certainly did not expect to encounter there. After a fairly short engagement, this frigate sailed to windward; shortly afterward the *Arethusa*, for it was she, touched on the island of Molène where she was promptly destroyed by the sea. The crew reached land, with the exception of fifteen men who tried to reach the English coast in a rowboat. The *Arethusa*, which had left the ports of England a few days earlier, believed itself to be fifty leagues off the coast of Ushant. The English were pleased to acknowledge that the crew of the *Arethusa* had been treated by the French with the greatest humanity.[74]

74

The *Alert* had a crew of eighty men, twelve six-pounder cannons, and twelve perriers [swivel guns]. The *Coureur* had only fifty sailors, eight two-pounder cannons, two three-pounders, and six perriers. The lugger's captain, M. de Rosily, an ensign, was unwilling to take his opponent's superiority into account. At the first cannon shot fired by this frigate, he fired a volley at the *Alert*. After a very lively engagement that lasted until 9:00 a.m., the lugger lowered its flag. At daybreak on June 18, the *Belle-Poule* sighted two English vessels observing her. But the captains of these vessels, backing down in the face of the difficulty of reaching the French frigate, rejoined their squadron, which was waiting for them offshore.

1. The *Arethusa* joined the *Belle-Poule*, and the cutter presented herself alongside me, to leeward. There is no seventy-four-gun ship so heavily railed. At the moment of combat, not a single man could be seen. In my lugger, the thickness of the vessel is not an inch and a half; I had no rail, we were uncovered up to the buckle of the shoe. I had eight two-pounder cannons, two three-pounders, six perriers, fifty men all told. The captain told me in English to go find the admiral. At first I pretended not to hear him; he had several of his men repeat it to me in bad French. I told him no, and taking the megaphone, I told him in English that he need not take so much trouble, because I had decided not to go and to do only what my frigate would do. During the conversation, as one of the two vessels was asterning or moving ahead of the other, we followed each other with the cannons. The *Arethusa* being very close astern of the *Belle-Poule* to leeward, I saw our frigate change its course. M. de la Clocheterie apparently wanting to change the bad position in which he found himself, I addressed the captain of the cutter and told him to arrive because my frigate was doing so, and that, as he was hindering me, if he did not lend himself to my maneuver, I would board him, at the same time putting my rudder to make him arrive. The frigates fired at each other with cannon; the grapeshot from the *Arethusa* itself fell very close to us. I also fired my volley at the cutter, which returned fire immediately. We continued, for some time, the fight at close range of pistols, each still having our topsail on the mast. (I did not want to sail, because, being sure of being taken, if I had followed the frigates which were fighting while underway, the cutter would still have been able to help the *Arethusa*, as soon as it had taken me away....) I fought for an hour and a half alongside in this position. The fight had begun at seven o'clock and I brought it to nine. I cut the boom yard in two places, I damaged all its maneuvers and sails, and gave it a few blows at water level, but I was never able to dent its rail. The cannons were loaded with a six-pounder, a bundle of grapeshot and a tin box filled with bullets. They are short, reinforced cannons, which they call "double fortified", excellent in these small vessels, and which can be loaded up to the muzzle without risk of bursting them. I could never have been overtaken if I had wanted to flee, having a considerable advantage over all the vessels whatsoever. I had recently adopted a new rigging which had been found so advantageous, both for the speed of maneuver and for the march, in my last cruise, under the orders of the *Danaé*, that M. le Comte d'Orvilliers had decided to take me for his discovery. She sighted vessels from the tops of her masts, signaled me to chase, and I overtook them with incredible speed. I saw myself chase ten vessels which she had sighted at noon to windward, not being able to see them from my vessel, having overtaken them at six o'clock in the evening, despite them forcing sails close-hauled, and leaving the *Danaé* 4 leagues to leeward of me. I never saw during this cruise any vessel of any kind whatsoever, that I did not overtake. I still had the advantage, when I left under the orders of the *Belle-Poule*, of being freed from expenses. I quote this to show that I was the master of not being taken, and that, if I was, it was only through subordination and real devotion to the service. Report of Mr. Rosily to the minister.[75]

75

The *Belle-Poule* entered Brest amid enthusiastic cheers from all the ships anchored in the harbor.

Captain Bélizal, who had agreed to sail on the *Victory*, had been unable to communicate with the vessel during the day of June 17th. The morning of the 18th passed without bringing any change to the situation of the French frigate. Captain Bélizal, dissatisfied with himself, painfully affected by the role he was playing, resolved to make sail and sail away. Before carrying out this plan, he wanted to make one last attempt, and he dispatched a boat carrying a letter for the leader of the English squadron. None of the vessels near him allowed the French boat to dock alongside. The latter was returning to his ship when two cannonballs were fired at the *Licorne* by the ship *Hector*. Captain Belizal fired his broadside from both sides to the surrounding ships and lowered his flag.[76]

76

The corvette *Hirondelle*, the fourth vessel of the division driven out on June 16 by Admiral Keppel's squadron, had managed to reach the island of Batz. The frigate *Pallas*, which had been cruising in the English Channel for several days, was joined on the morning of June 16 by a ship and two frigates. The captains of these three vessels each invited the officer commanding the French frigate to pass aft of the *Victory*. They affirmed that their admiral was animated by the most courteous feelings toward our navy. His only desire was to be certain that the frigate was legitimately flying the French colors. American ships, the English said, hoist the white ensign when they sight us, and, with the help of this subterfuge, they manage to elude us. Ordered to surrender, as soon as his frigate was in the midst of the British squadron, the captain of the *Pallas* lowered his flag. The disloyal conduct of the English could not excuse the fault committed by the captains of the *Pallas* and the *Licorne* in not opposing, as Lieutenant de la Clocheterie had done, a clear and categorical refusal to Admiral Keppel's demands.

In the struggle that M. de la Clocheterie had waged to maintain the honor of his flag intact, his frigate had suffered considerable losses. Lieutenant de la Clocheterie Green de Saint-Marsault, second in command of the *Belle-Poule*, had been killed; Captain de la Clocheterie, Ensign de la Roche Kerandraon, and M. Bouvet, auxiliary officer, were among the wounded. Reporting to Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers on his battle with the *Arethusa*, M. de la Clocheterie said: "I cannot praise enough, General, the valor and composure of my officers. The Chevalier de Capellis knew how to inspire all.

1. The *Arethusa* and the *Belle-Poule*, both of equal strength, had fought with true ferocity. The *Belle-Poule* had twenty-six twelve-pounder guns and four nine-pounder guns. Captain de la Clocheterie said in his report that the *Arethusa* had twenty-eight twelve-pounder guns.[77]

77

Mr. Chevalier de Capellis was able to inspire all his audacity in the crews of the battery he commanded. Mr. de la Roche Kerandraon, who had a broken arm an hour and a half after the start of the battle, went to have it bandaged and returned to his post. Messrs. Damard and Sébire, auxiliary officers, behaved with all the bravery and composure expected of the most seasoned soldiers. Mr. Bouvet, an auxiliary officer, seriously wounded, never wanted to go down. My crew is worthy of sharing the glory acquired by my officers. The captain of the *Belle-Poule* was appointed ship captain, and Mr. Bouvet, frigate lieutenant. Mr. de la Roche Kerandraon[1], ensign, received the Cross of Saint-Louis and a pension of four hundred livres. A letter of congratulations was sent, by order of the King, to the officers and guards of the navy. The government granted the widows of the men killed during the battle a pension of 150 francs, with an increase of 20 francs for each child. Finally, all the men of the crew received a gratuity of two months' pay. The minister's dispatch announcing the rewards awarded to the *Belle-Poule* arrived in Brest, by return of the courier who had brought Captain de la Clocheterie's report to Paris.

The court of London had resolved to wage war on us the day it learned of the commercial treaty we had concluded with the United States of America. Since March 15, the date of its ambassador's recall, it had carefully refrained from any action that would have revealed its intentions to us. The violent attack to which M. de la Clocheterie's division had been subjected indicated that the cabinet of Saint-James judged the time ripe to begin hostilities. Before giving Admiral Keppel the mission to bring back any warships he might encounter, England had sent reinforcements to all its stations.

1. Mr. de la Roche Kerandraon was only seventeen years old.[78]

78

Thirteen ships had left for North America, where Admiral Howe was already stationed with eleven vessels. A fifty-man ship, the *Romney*, and frigates had been sent to Newfoundland. Two ships, under the command of Admiral Barrington, were in the Caribbean Sea, where we had only frigates. By mid-June 1778, Great Britain had fifty ships at sea and twenty-five in the Channel ports ready to sail. By not preventing the attack with which we had been threatened for several months, we had misjudged the naval strength of both nations. The English possessed more ships than we did; but, due to their maritime organization, they could not man them promptly. Word was being sent from London to our Minister of the Navy that the British Admiralty was experiencing great difficulty in procuring sailors. Despite the offer of very high bonuses, few men came forward to serve on warships. "They did not dare," added the person who gave this information to M. de Sartines, "touch the merchant sailors." The local authorities in the merchant ports, relying on the fact that war had not been declared, strongly opposed the use of the "press." In order to protect ourselves against a return to the violence that had marked the beginning of the war of 1756, we had placed an embargo on English ships in our ports. The cabinet of Saint-James, having proceeded in the same way with regard to French ships in the ports of Great Britain, the pledge, intended to compensate our merchant navy for any illegitimate losses it might incur, was of little importance. By attacking the *Belle-Poule* and the *Coureur* without a declaration of war, and by seizing, by a subterfuge unworthy of a great nation, the *Pallas* and the *Licorne*, the British government had violated all the rules observed by civilized peoples.[79]

79

The mission entrusted to Lieutenant General d'Estaing took away our right to blame the conduct of our adversaries.[1] After the departure of Byron's thirteen ships for America, England had only Keppel's twenty-one ships in the Channel. Now, as will be seen later, at the end of June we had thirty-two ships in the harbor of Brest. If we had hastened our armaments, and this was not only possible, but easy because of our maritime organization, we could have had, by May, forces equal to those of Admirals Keppel and Byron combined. In this case, the British government would have delayed the departure of this admiral for North America, which would have left the field clear for Admiral d'Estaing. If the English had decided to send Byron to Howe's aid, we would have been, for some time, superior to the enemy in the Channel. The return of our merchant ships would have been assured, and the enemy's trade would probably have suffered great losses. We had therefore committed a mistake in not taking advantage of the advantage our institutions gave us. If we considered war inevitable, and we could have no illusions in this regard, we should not have left the court of London free to begin it whenever it saw fit.

1. The nature of the mission with which the Count d'Estaing was charged is clearly indicated in the attached order given by this general officer to the frigate *Alcmène*, before the departure from Toulon: "The King's frigate *Alcmène* is ordered, if, despite all the precautions it should have taken, it finds itself separated from the squadron after passing the meridian of Cape Saint-Vincent, to rendezvous at the port of Boston, on the coast of New England, where it will receive news of me. It will avoid being recognized on the way by any ships it might encounter. If, however, an English fleet, going to or returning from New England, were in a position to be attacked with advantage, it would seize it. It would only take possession of what could be taken without being too weakened, and it would destroy the rest. She would openly protect and treat as friends and allies of the King all vessels belonging to the United States of America."

D'ESTAING.

Done aboard the ship *Languedoc*, in the harbor of Toulon, April 12, 1778.[80]

80

The English had learned at the end of May that the squadron that had left Toulon on April 13th had headed west, after crossing the Strait of Gibraltar. Convinced that Count d'Estaing was bound for the American coast, they had pressed ahead with the fitting out of the ships intended to reinforce Howe's squadron. Admiral Keppel had rallied, on June 13th, off Plymouth, Admiral Byron's thirteen ships and accompanied them to within twenty leagues of Ushant. He was re-entering the Channel when he encountered the four ships under the command of M. de la Clocheterie. The Versailles cabinet, inaccurately informed of the English movements, was unaware that the ships that had left Plymouth had been heading for America. It was believed in Paris that Admiral Byron, after escorting a convoy offshore, was to join the Channel squadron on his return. In this hypothesis, Admiral Keppel would have had thirty-four vessels under his command. However, at that time, we only had twenty-six fully armed vessels in Brest. Although the Ministry was convinced of the need to make a demonstration, it hesitated to give our squadron the order to sail. The government feared compromising the most important part of our naval forces in an unequal struggle, and from the very beginning of the war. M. de Kerguelen, who enjoyed a certain notoriety as a naval officer, wrote to the Minister at that time: "I think that if Spain does not declare itself, you would do well not to send out large squadrons and not to risk decisive battles. I think that forty ships in Brest harbor and troops on the coasts will do more harm to England than if they were at sea, because they will force the enemy to arm sixty ships of the line, but it is necessary to have a few ships and many frigates at sea to destroy their commerce by sustained cruises.[81]

81

If we were defeated in a first important matter, we would be lost; it is opinion that guides men." Since a break with England was imminent, several memoranda along similar lines had been addressed to Monsieur de Sartines. It is therefore legitimate to recognize that the government was not alone in bearing responsibility for this opinion. The commander-in-chief of the naval army, assembled in the harbor of Brest, judged the situation quite differently. He wrote on June 22, that is, four days after the *Belle-Poule's* return to Brest: "My opinion would not be to send the army into the Channel, where we have no port suitable for receiving it, and where it would be at risk of being burdened by a westerly or southwesterly wind that would necessarily draw it to the coast of England, but to have it cross at a suitable distance from the channel so as not to be carried there by the currents." He added a little further on: "In the position I have indicated above, it is within reach of attacking Admiral Byron on his return and of opposing his meeting with Admiral Keppel." Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers gave the minister an undertaking to act with extreme circumspection. Nevertheless, he could not give him the assurance that he would succeed in avoiding any engagement with the English. Admitting that he was obliged to give battle to the united forces of Byron and Keppel, he was convinced that his squadron would come out of this encounter with honor. The government, overcoming its last hesitations, sent him the order to sail. The cabinet at Versailles, continuing to entertain strange illusions about the plans of the court of London, did not admit that we were at war with Great Britain. In the instructions addressed to Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers, there was only talk of reprisals to be exercised against our neighbors.[82]

82

This general officer was to cruise at the entrance to the English Channel and bring back to Brest, using force if necessary, any warships and merchant vessels he could reach.[1]

Contrary winds kept the squadron in the harbor for several days. The Navy Department took advantage of this time, and six vessels were added to the squadron. On July 8, thirty-two vessels, eleven frigates, corvettes, and brigs, or forty-three vessels, left Brest in good order. The spirit of the fleet was excellent, and a single desire animated it: to avenge the insult done to our flag by the capture of the *Licorne*, the *Pallas*, and the *Coureur*. General d'Orvilliers wrote to Monsieur de Sartines on July 9: "The general officers and captains, gathered on board the Bretagne to hear the King's orders read, gave me new assurances of their zeal and asked me, headed by Monseigneur the Duke of Chartres, to beg you to obtain permission from the King to enter the Channel and to attack Admiral Keppel, even in his harbors, if he persisted in not leaving." To the extreme prudence of the minister and the hesitations of the government, the generals and captains responded with a request to go to the enemy. The corvette *Lively*, chased by the squadron's frigates on July 9, was joined by the *Iphigénie*. The English officer declined the invitation made to him to pass astern of the *Bretagne*. After receiving the broadside from the French frigate, he lowered his flag.

1. I replied in part to your dispatch of the 3rd, which I received yesterday evening, in the postscript to my letter of the 6th. "I have the honor to repeat to you in this one that I will make every effort and that I will be well seconded by the zeal of all the officers to satisfy His Majesty's desire to use reprisals against England, and that, if circumstances are in our favor, we will intercept at least some of the convoys that he expects from America and the ships that she has recalled" (Letter from d'Orvilliers to the Minister). In his dispatch of the 3rd, the Minister informed General d'Orvilliers that the King expressly recommended that he treat well the captains, officers, and crews of the ships that he would arrest.[83]

83

A few days after our squadron's departure, Monsieur de Sartines learned that Admiral Keppel had reappeared in the English Channel. Before returning to port, the English had seized several merchant ships. The Versailles cabinet, no longer able to misunderstand England's true intentions, decided to consider our break with that power definitive. A letter addressed by the King to the Duke of Penthièvre, who was then Grand Admiral, informed Europe of our new situation with regard to Great Britain. Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers was immediately informed of the resolution taken by the French Government. He welcomed it with all the more satisfaction because it removed all uncertainty about his proper course of action. His duty was clearly defined; he was to raid all ships flying the English flag.

The British Admiralty had deployed the greatest effort to reinforce Keppel's squadron. She had managed, in the first days of July, to place twenty-six ships under the command of this admiral. In bringing this news to the attention of the commander of our fleet, the minister urged him to act with extreme caution. A few days later, it was learned in Paris that the English squadron, augmented by four new ships, that is to say, thirty ships of the line, had set sail. A notice, carrying dispatches announcing Keppel's sortie and the strength of his army, was immediately dispatched to search for d'Orvilliers. The English squadron, although numbering two ships less than ours, was superior to it in the number of cannons. The ministers, pursued by the fear of a failure, reassured, on the other hand, by the attitude of the fleet and its leader, were very irresolute. In this instance, they left to General d'Orvilliers the choice of the course to take and the responsibility for the events that might result from it.[84]

84

"Since you leave me free, Monseigneur," replied the general, "to continue my cruise, I will not return the army to Brest, unless positive orders oblige me to do so, before the month of navigation, explained in my instructions and known to all the captains, has elapsed. Until then, I will not flee before Admiral Keppel, whatever forces he may have; only if I know him to be too superior, I will evade a disproportionate fight as best I can, but I admit that if the enemy truly seeks to deliver him, it will be very difficult to avoid him."[1]

1. Letter written at sea, in response to a dispatch from the minister dated July 12.[85]

85

BOOK II

Battle of Ushant. - Return of the English to Portsmouth and the French to Brest. - Discussions arising from the events of July 27th on both sides of the strait. - Incident concerning Lieutenant General Duke of Chartres, commander of the Third Squadron. - Vice-Admiral Keppel, accused of incapacity by one of his lieutenants, appears before a court-martial. - New sortie of the two squadrons. - They return to port without having fought. - Engagement, off Pondicherry, of the divisions of Commodore Vernon and Captain de Tronjolly. - The English seize the French establishments in India. - Capture of the islands of Saint-Pierre and Miquelon.

I

The French fleet was cruising about fifty leagues west-northwest of Ushant when, on July 23rd, our scouts reported the enemy. Admiral Keppel had left Portsmouth with thirty ships, twenty-four hours after our departure from Brest. Four days passed during which the breeze was very fresh from the west and the sea rough. The French maneuvered to maintain the advantage of the wind that the English wanted to take from them. On the 27th at sunrise, the two squadrons were running on port tack, heading northwest, with west-southwest winds. The *Victory*, which Admiral Keppel was sailing on, remained about a league and a half to the east-northeast of the ship *Bretagne*, on which was flown the flag of Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers. The *Duc-de-Bourgogne*, of eighty guns, and the *Alexandre*, of seventy-four, having separated from our fleet during the night of July 23-24, the number of ships was the same on both sides.[86]

86

However, our squadron only had 2,118 guns, while the total number of cannons on the English ships was 2,282. Finally, three French ships, the *Fier*, the *Saint-Michel*, and the *Triton*, representing 174 guns, were too small to be included in a line of battle.[1] Around nine o'clock in the morning, the weather having become manageable, the Count of Orvilliers had his ships turn luff to luff by counter-march to close in on the enemy. The English, who had continued to sail to port, favored by a change of breeze, found themselves very quickly in our waters. Admiral Keppel took the same tack as us, and covered himself with sails in order to reach our rearguard. Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers, judging with a very sure eye the dangers to which he was exposed, signaled his fleet to tack from wind to wind, all at once, then to form the line of battle, tacks to port, in reverse order. This evolution, executed with great promptness, changed the relative situation of the two squadrons. The English, who had maneuvered with great haste, were in disorder. Some of their ships had fallen to leeward and ran the risk of being cut off by ours. Admiral Keppel decided to bear away to rally them, and he steered to leeward of the French line. The two squadrons were placed in the following order:

1. In reality, we had 1,944 guns against 2,282.[87]

87

ARMÉE FRANÇAISE.

Ligne de bataille. — Ordre renversé.

Noms des vaisseaux.	Nombre de canons.	Noms des capitaines.
Escadre bleue.		
Le Diadème	74	La Cardonnie.
Le Conquérant	74	De Monteil.
Le Solitaire	64	De Briqueville.
L'Intrépide	74	De Beaussier.
Le Saint-Esprit	80	Le duc de Chartres, lieut. général. Lamotte-Picquet, chef d'escadre.
Le Zodiaque	74	De la Porte Vezins.
Le Roland	64	De l'Archantel.
Le Robuste	74	De Grasse.
Le Sphinx	64	De Soulanges.
Escadre blanche.		
L'Artésien	64	Des Touches.
L'Orient	74	Hector.
L'Actionnaire	64	De Croissy.
Le Fendant	74	De Vaudreuil.
La Bretagne	110	D'Orvilliers, lieutenant général. Du Pavillon, major de l'armée. Duplessis Parscau.
Le Magnifique	74	Chevalier de Brach.
L'Actif	74	Thomas d'Orves.
La Ville de Paris	90	De Guichen.
Le Réfléchi	64	De Gillart Surville.
Escadre blanche et bleue.		
Le Vengeur	64	D'Amblimont.
Le Glorieux	74	De Beausset.
L'Indien	64	De la Grandière.
Le Palmier	74	De Béals.
La Couronne	80	Duchaffault, lieutenant général. Huon de Kermadec.
Le Bien-Aimé	74	Daubenton.
L'Eveillé	64	De Botdéru.
L'Amphion	50	De Trobriant.
Le Dauphin Royal	70	De Nieuil.
Vaisseaux hors la ligne.		
Triton	64	De Ligondès.
Saint-Michel	60	Mithon de Genouilly.
Fier	50	Turpin de Breuil.

ARMÉE ANGLAISE.

Ligne de bataille.

Noms des vaisseaux.	Nombre de canons.	Noms des capitaines.
	Avant-garde.	
Queen	90	Hartland, vice-amiral.
Sandwich	90	Edwards.
Shrewsbury	74	Ross.
Terrible	74	Bickerton.
Thunderer	74	Valsingham.
Vengeance	74	Clements.
Valiant	74	Gower.
Vigilant	64	Kingsmill.
Vorcester	64	Robinson.
Stirlingcastle	74	Douglas.
	Corps de bataille.	
Victory	100	Faulkner. Sir Augustus Keppel, amiral.
Duke	90	Brereton.
Berwick	74	Stewart.
Cumberland	74	Peyton.
Courageux	74	Mulgrave.
Centaur	74	Crosby.
Egmont	74	Allen.
Elizabeth	74	Maitland.
America	64	Longford.
Bienfaisant	64	Bride.
	Arrière-garde.	
Defiance	64	Goodall.
Exeter	74	Moore.
Formidable	90	..... Palliser, vice-amiral.
Océan	90	Laforest.
Prince George	74	Lindsay.
Foudroyant	84	Jervis.
Hector	74	Hamilton.
Monarch	70	Roweley.
Ramillies	74	Digby.
Robust	74	Hood.

The English passed out of range of the ships *Diadème, Conquérant*, and *Solitaire*. It was the *Intrépide*, the fourth ship in the French line, that fired the first cannon shots. The two squadrons filed past, each ship receiving the enemy's broadside and sending its own. Some of our ships, including the *Artésien* and the *Ville-de-Paris*, found themselves very close to the English. The former had failed to tack once, and the latter was holding the wind very poorly. The three-decker, the *Saint-Esprit*, bore away to cover the *Artésien*. As for the *Ville-de-Paris*, she had to fight for a moment, the *Victory* to starboard, and the *Foudroyant* to port. The latter ship had not hesitated to pass between the *Ville-de-Paris* and the French line. The firing, which had begun at eleven o'clock in the morning, ceased around one thirty. Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers, determined to continue the fight, gave the order to the blue squadron, which was the vanguard, to let them arrive by a successive movement, and to the fleet to form the line of battle, tacks to starboard. The signals hoisted on board the *Bretagne*, for the execution of this maneuver, were not seen by the first ships of the blue squadron. This incident was all the more regrettable since the two squadrons, running on opposite tack, were moving away rapidly. Now, the evolution prescribed by the general could only be effective if it was carried out without delay. The ships which were marching at the head of the fleet, continuing to run on port tack, the *Saint-Esprit* let them arrive and began the movement. In order to be accurately informed of the commander-in-chief's intentions, the Duke of Chartres passed within earshot of *Bretagne*. Lieutenant-General d'Orvilliers informed him that he intended to extend the English line, from tail to head, downwind. The strength of the breeze having prevented our ships from using their lower batteries, he wanted to place the enemy in the same position.[88]

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When the French fleet formed up on the other side, it found itself to leeward and quite a distance behind the English. In this situation, the initiative of the attack no longer belonged to it.

After the two squadrons had filed past, the English, who had fought before being properly formed, were in the greatest disorder. Several ships, having suffered serious damage to their masts, had fallen to leeward. When the smoke cleared, Admiral Keppel was able to assess the position of the two fleets. Recognizing that those of his ships that were out of position would run the risk of being cut off if he followed his advance guard, he hastened to recall Admiral Hartland. His army maneuvered to re-form, but by nightfall, most of the English ships had not resumed their stations. The two squadrons continued to sail, tacks to starboard, the English to windward and ahead of the French. During the night, Admiral Keppel made for Portsmouth, which he entered a few days later, leaving only a small division cruising in the Channel. On the evening of July 28, the French squadron, carried east by the currents, sighted the island of Ouessant. The *Duc-de-Bourgogne* and the *Alexandre*, which had separated from the army during the night of the 23rd to the 24th, had not reappeared. After the engagement of July 27, in which it had lost part of its mast, the *Amphion* had headed for Brest. The *Réfléchi*, badly mistreated during the battle, and the *Sphinx*, which had lost its bowsprit following a collision with the frigate *La Fortunée*, had received permission to put in. Some ships, such as the *Bretagne*, the *Ville-de-Paris*, the *Saint-Esprit*, the *Couronne*, and the *Actif*, needed repairs. Finally, of the twenty-seven ships that comprised our fleet at that time, three, the *Saint-Michel*, *Fier*, and *Triton*, could not be put into service.

1. The *Amphion* was a fifty-gun ship of a very large caliber. That is why it had been put into service.[89]

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These ships had been positioned, during the day of July 27th, to leeward, with the frigates. These considerations persuaded Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers to return to Brest. He intended to put to sea again as soon as his ships were fit to sustain a new engagement. On July 31st, three ships and two frigates were sent to cruise to the entrance of the English Channel.

The encounter of July 27th was less a battle than an extremely fierce and short-lived engagement. The losses of the French fleet, thirty ships strong, amounted to only 161 killed and 513 wounded.[1] They would have been much different if the two squadrons had fought on the same tack. That day, we had won over the English, not a great victory, but an indisputable advantage. Admiral Keppel, free to continue the fight, since his fleet was to windward of ours, had taken advantage of his position to withdraw. This success of our navy was particularly significant due to the circumstances. The disasters of the last war had left a deep mark on people's minds. It seemed difficult for our admirals, captains, and officers to have, to the same degree as their adversaries, the knowledge and, above all, the practice of squadron maneuvers.

1. Messrs. Bessey de la Vouste, ship captain, de Vincelles, ensign, Damart, frigate lieutenant, de Molore, and de Fortmanoir, infantry officers, were killed in the battle of Ushant. Among the wounded were Messrs. Lieutenant General Duchaffault, the ship captains d'Aymar and de Sillans, the lieutenants de la Croix, de Cœffier de Breuil, the knight Duchaffault, de Fayard, de Vigny, de Beaumanoir, the ensigns Desnos de la Hautière, de Melfort, the knight du Bouexic, d'Abbadie SaintGermain, the marine guards of Montuchon, de Boisguehenneuc, the auxiliary officers Jambom and Rouillard, the infantry officers of Chateau-Giron, de Rivière, de Bucheran.[90]

It was therefore not without a certain apprehension that the government, and we must add the entire nation, had contemplated a new clash with a power whose ascendancy at sea was as well established as England's. France therefore welcomed the results of this first encounter between the two navies with genuine enthusiasm. Louis XVI wrote to Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers to compliment him on his conduct and instruct him to convey his full satisfaction to the officers and crews of the squadron. The King concluded by saying: "I have ordered that the greatest care be taken of the wounded. Tell the widows and relatives of the dead how deeply I feel for the loss they have suffered. M. de Sarlines will convey my subsequent orders to you, and I am assured of success by the manner in which they will be executed."

II

A few days after the squadron's return to Brest, the various incidents of July 27 became known. It was learned that the failure to carry out the orders of the commander-in-chief had prevented us from continuing the fight under conditions that, in all probability, would have brought us a brilliant success. [1]

1. Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers said that the lead ships of the blue squadron had likely deprived the nation of a brilliant success, and he added: "I say likely, because it remains uncertain which course Admiral Keppel would have followed, of the only two courses he had to take: abandoning the ships of his rearguard, which would have been infallibly cut off and defeated by the four ships of my vanguard that had not fought, as well as by the three in reserve that I had designated for this purpose, or coming to the aid of his own and making efforts to extricate them." In the first case, he shamefully admitted defeat; in the second, the fight would have become very heated. But there is reason to believe that he would have had, in this second encounter, all the more disadvantage since, to rescue his rearguard, he would have been obliged to fight the white and blue squadrons again, and since our attack took place from downwind, he lost the superior force of his three-decked ships, the first batteries of which I rendered useless.[91]

A very strong reaction occurred in public opinion, and the initial joy was followed by great discontent. The commander of the blue squadron was accused of having failed in his duties as a general and even as a soldier. It would have been easy to enlighten public opinion and bring it back to opinions more in keeping with fairness. But this affair, instead of remaining in the purely military domain, was transferred to the political arena, and from then on, it was no longer possible for the public to know the truth.

The Duke of Chartres had not served long enough in the navy to fully exercise the command entrusted to him. Squadron Leader de Lamotte-Picquet, one of the bravest and most capable general officers in the French navy, had been placed with him to serve as his guide. In a monarchy, the place of princes being where one fights, the Duke of Chartres represented the royal family on the fleet. Since the day of his arrival in Brest, he had loudly expressed the desire to see our fleet come to blows with the English. He had spoken the same language on July 9, during the meeting of the general officers and captains aboard the *Bretagne*. On July 26, that is to say, the day before the day of the battle of Ushant, the *Saint-Esprit* had communicated with *Bretagne*. The Duke of Chartres had taken advantage of this circumstance to inform the commander-in-chief that he was of the opinion, as was Squadron Leader de Lamotte-Picquet, to fight Admiral Keppel. This step indicated, on the part of the prince, the firm intention to support, in Paris, the energetic decisions towards which the commander-in-chief was inclined. As for his attitude on the day of the battle, it had been that of a man of his rank and a Frenchman. The most authentic testimonies leave no doubt in this regard. If, on the day of the battle, the Duke of Chartres had wanted, for a reason, moreover perfectly inexplicable, to evade the obligation to execute the orders of Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers, his advisor would have had to maintain a culpable silence.[92]

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It is not permissible to suspect Lamotte-Picquet of having accepted such a role. We will now examine the facts with the sole concern of establishing the truth about this episode of the Battle of Ushant. The signal given to the blue squadron to "arrive by successive movements" expressed an order given directly by the commander-in-chief to the vanguard ships, which all were required to obey, strictly adhering to the rules of tactics in their execution. According to these rules, the evolution was to begin with the ship at the head of our fleet. Thus, the leading role did not belong to the commander of the vanguard, but rather to the captain of the ship *Diadème*. As for the general officer whose flag was flown on the *Saint-Esprit*, whether it was the Duke of Chartres or any other, he had the obligation to monitor and press, if he judged it necessary, the execution of the orders of the head of the fleet. He could, for this purpose, send special signals to the *Diadème* or to another ship in his squadron. Finally, if none of the ships placed in front of him obeyed the signal, it was up to him to begin the movement.[1] It follows from the above that the reproach of having caused the failure of General d'Orvilliers' combination reached the ships which preceded the *Saint-Esprit*. These ships had not noticed, in good time, the flags flying from the masts of the *Bretagne*, the *Saint-Esprit* and several other repeaters. [2]

1. It was the movement of the *Saint-Esprit* that decided Admiral Keppel to recall Vice-Admiral Hartland, who had turned back to pursue our rearguard. (Report from d'Orvilliers.)

2. "I have reason to believe that if the head of the blue squadron, in the reversed order in which we fought, had responded better to my signals, Providence would have crowned our work with a day as glorious for your ministry as for the French flag. But if it did not allow our successes to be complete, at least it granted visible protection to the King's arms, having only delayed this maneuver and having executed with precision all the others it inspired in me." (Letter from d'Orvilliers to the minister.)[93]

Was it the smoke that had intoxicated the *Diadème*, the *Conquérant*, the *Solitaire*, and the *Intrépide* from seeing the signals, or was this part of the service neglected aboard these four vessels? It is difficult to say today, but whether this regrettable result was due to one or the other of these two causes, the captains of the *Cardonnie, Monteil, Bricqueville*, and *Beaussier* could not be blamed for having disobeyed orders of which they were unaware.[1] In a letter dated August 3, Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers drew the minister's attention to a few captains with whom he was extremely satisfied. "Here, Monseigneur," he wrote to him, "are the names of the ships and captains who seemed to me to maneuver with the most precision and attention. I do not understand the general officers who almost all have my support, and I have tried to deserve theirs. These ships and captains are: the *Orient*, Hector; *Fendant*, Marquis de Vaudreuil, above all others; the *Magnifique*, de Brach; these last two were my sailors in the battle and we have never had better ones; the *Dauphin Royal*, Marquis de Nieul; the *Artésien*, Des Touches[2].”

1. I am accused, wrote Captain la Cardonnie, of being the cause that part of the enemy rearguard was not destroyed because I did not arrive at it. The signal was given aboard the *Saint-Esprit*, leader of the squadron of which I was a part. I reply that I did not see this signal. I affirm it with all my officers and pilots. It is said that it is very surprising that I did not see it, especially, it is added, since the *Fier* repeated it. I reply that there is nothing surprising that it was not seen, on board the *Diadème* which was the fourth in front of the *Saint-Esprit*, and that, if the *Fier* repeated it, it was out of range to distinguish the flags especially since it was towards the rear of the fleet and in the sun in relation to us. Finally, I cannot find it surprising that this signal made on board the *Saint-Esprit* was not seen from my side, since three ships, placed by the order of battle between the leader and us, did not see it, and I think that they did not see it, since it is positive that they did not repeat it.

2. Returning to the same subject, the Count of Orvilliers said in a letter of August 5: "The *Fendant*, whose fire equaled the precision of the maneuvers throughout the campaign, and whose captain, the Marquis de Vaudreuil, cannot receive enough praise. The *Magnifique*, another sailor from Brittany, also distinguished himself by his fire and by his attention to close in on the General. The *Actif* fought bravely, but the ship in the entire fleet that took the most fire, and also returned the most, was the *Ville-de-Paris* which, drifting more than the others, gave way to the wind to the *Foudroyant* which was beating it to port, when Admiral Keppel, who had already arrived under fire from *Bretagne*, was pulling it to starboard.... The *Dauphin-Royal* and the *Palmier* distinguished themselves by the liveliness of their fire."[94]

During the day of July 27, the attitude of the vanguard commander had been not only correct, but instrumental to the day's success. With the exception of the first ships of the blue squadron, which, in the words of Count d'Orvilliers, had failed to pay attention to the signals, the conduct of the army had been irreproachable. All, captains, officers, sailors, and soldiers, had distinguished themselves by their zeal and goodwill. After this account, supported by reliable, authentic documents, one searches in vain for what could have served as a basis for these accusations of disobedience and indiscipline, directed at that time against honorable officers, and which are still readily repeated today.

III

Whether M. de Sartines believed it would be useful, at the beginning of the war, to act harshly, or whether he wanted to satisfy public opinion, he resolved to bring before a court martial the captains of the ships *Diadème*, *Conquérant*[1], *Duc-de-Bourgogne*, *Alexandre*[2], *Sphinx*, and the captain of the frigate *Fortunée*[3]. Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers, certain of the zeal and devotion of his officers, convinced that the errors committed during this short campaign were due to inexperience in squadron navigation, opposed any pursuit.

1. The *Diadème* and the *Conquérant* were the first two ships of the fleet on July 27.
2. The *Duc-de-Bourgogne* and the *Alexandre* had separated from the fleet during the night of July 22-24.
3. The *Sphinx* and the *Fortunée*[3]had approached each other.[95]

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He explained his thoughts to the minister in letters, the most interesting passages of which we attach here:

"…Time, Monseigneur, is too short to undertake the investigation of the trial or the examination of the conduct of Messrs. de Rochechouart and Trémigon regarding their separation from the fleet on the night of July 23-24, since, in six days, if the weather continues, I set sail. The same applies to the examination of the ships *Diadème* and *Conquérant*, which, in reverse order, led the blue squadron, and finally to the boarding of the frigate *Fortunée* and the ship *Sphinx*. The information would place a number of officers whose services are absolutely necessary to us at this time under the jurisdiction of the courts martial and naval tribunals, and necessarily for a considerable time. It is therefore necessary to postpone the investigations and judgments until the fleet returns. But allow me to tell you my thoughts; if you act with this severity at the beginning of the war, you will take away all the energy from people's souls. Most of our officers cannot hide from themselves that they lack experience in the whole of the fleets and squadrons; that, consequently, they are in the position of making involuntary mistakes, and if the hope of indulgence is forbidden to them, the fear of seeing their honor compromised will keep them in a timidity which, far from preparing them to do better, will absorb talents and prevent the progress that one should expect from experience. You will be free, Monseigneur, to no longer employ officers with whom you are not satisfied, and, if you adopt my opinion, dictated by the love of the good of the service and the glory of your ministry, this will be the only consequence that the day of July 27, which is otherwise honorable for the nation, should have.[96]

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"..... Messrs. de Rochechouart[1] and Trémigon[2] the elder assure that they did not notice the signals I had made at eight thirty in the evening on July 23, which the change in wind had caused. If they had been more experienced in their craft, they would have seen for themselves that orderly movement was essential to avoid giving up the advantage of the wind to the enemy, to whose leeward they found themselves, in fact, the next day. The distance of the fires of the King's fleet, which I had lit and kept up all night, was yet another clear warning of the maneuver they had to make. But all these were errors of inexperience, or, to put it bluntly, of ignorance, which, although considerable, do not affect honor and uprightness of intention. Based on events, I believe that both M. de Trémigon the elder (captain of the *Alexandre*) and M. de la Cardonnie (captain of the *Diademe*) have proven their worth. I believe them to be good sailors, but I cannot grant them officerships, especially the latter...

".....But finally, Monseigneur, the faults are purely due to ignorance, and there will never be a general dispute between two considerable fleets, land or sea, without similar ones. I therefore always maintain, and I believe it will be the most universal feeling, that one should not approach matters with great severity, especially when success is favorable. Besides, your navy is too small to be able to deprive yourself of the services of a portion of its members who are impossible to replace."

Firmness is essential for leading men, but this quality is only of full value when applied appropriately.

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1. The squadron leader who had his flag on the ship the *Duc-de-Bourgogne*.
2. The captain of the *Alexandre*.[97]

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Count d'Orvilliers, who had particular experience in squadron navigation, was well aware of how difficult it was, at the beginning of the war, to assemble, both in England and in France, a fleet of thirty-two ships, maneuvering well, possessing perfect cohesion, and completely in the hands of its commander. In a letter, dated July 12 and written at sea four days after the sortie from Brest, he had warned the minister that several of his captains were maneuvering poorly, and he had added this observation, the accuracy of which has often been verified since that time:

"This, Monseigneur, supports what I have told you several times, regarding the necessity of evolution squadrons in peacetime." M. de Sartines, agreeing with Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers, renounced the harsh measures he had believed necessary. However, M. de la Cardonnie, captain of the *Diadème*, lost his command.

After Admiral Keppel's departure from Portsmouth on July 9 to meet us, the English people had impatiently awaited the news of our defeat. The long-standing reputation of the British navy, its undisputed superiority during recent wars, were in their eyes a sure guarantee of victory. The truth, when it became known, caused our neighbors great disappointment. It was said, to console national pride, that the French had taken advantage of their leeward position to allow the English to arrive during the night and make a run for Brest. But this did not explain to a nation accustomed to matters of the sea the inaction of the English squadron on the afternoon of July 27. Why had Admiral Keppel, having the advantage of the wind, not attacked us, if he was really in a position to do so? It was not time that had been lacking, since the last cannon shots had been fired around two o'clock in the afternoon, and at that time of year and in that latitude, night does not come until very late.[98]

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It was therefore clear that the commander-in-chief of the British fleet, an officer as experienced as he was brave, had backed away from a second engagement. The maneuvers executed by the English squadron on the afternoon of July 27 became the subject of heated discussions. Admiral Keppel enjoyed such popularity that he was exonerated, but the English wanted a culprit, and they believed they had found one in Vice-Admiral Palliser. He was accused of having remained to windward of the fleet, despite the signals ordering his squadron to take up its position. The stubbornness of this general officer in remaining away from the main body and the vanguard had, it was said, prevented the commander-in-chief from forming a regular line, and consequently from renewing the battle. Vice-Admiral Palliser, believing that the *Victory's* staff was not unconnected with the attacks to which he was subjected, complained very strongly to Admiral Keppel about the conduct of the officers of that ship. He begged him to publicly deny the rumors that were damaging his honor. Not having obtained the satisfaction to which he believed he was entitled, Vice-Admiral Palliser addressed a complaint against his chief to the Admiralty. He declared that Admiral Keppel had compromised, by his negligence and incapacity, the honor of the English flag. The Ministry, sacrificing the interests of discipline to political grudges, took the singular decision to bring, on the complaint of one of his inferiors, the chief of the fleet before a court-martial. The admiral, honorably acquitted, as was easy to predict, received the congratulations of both houses and of the city of London. His opponent was obliged to resign his position in the squadron, and to resign his membership of the House of Commons. The captain of the *Duke*, a sixty-gun ship, accused of having taken no part in the action, although she had passed within a short distance of the French line, was declared unworthy of service.[99]

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The liveliness of the debates that arose on both sides of the strait over the various incidents of July 27th can be explained by the importance both nations attached to the results of a first encounter. For England, it was a question of knowing whether, in this new struggle, it would achieve the easy successes of recent wars. France wondered, not without some anxiety, whether it would be able to take the revenge to which the country had aspired since the treaty of 1763. This affair, "honorable for the nation," as Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers had so aptly put it, inspired the English with respect for our navy and us with justifiable confidence in the outcome of the war. These are the circumstances that, from a historical point of view, give particular interest to the Battle of Ushant.

IV

Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers set sail on August 16 with twenty-three vessels, the only ones fit to sail. A few days later, five vessels left Brest and joined him off Ushant. After remaining until August 27 at the opening of the English Channel and on the southern coast of England, the army headed south and established its cruise off Cape Finisterre. Monsieur de Sartines having ordered Count d'Orvilliers to return before the gales of the equinox, this general officer anchored at Brest on September 18. The *Junon*, belonging to his squadron, had encountered the thirty-gun frigate *Fox* about forty leagues south-southwest of Ushant. After a very fierce battle, the English frigate, dismasted, had lowered its flag.[1]

1. Captain de Beaumont informed the minister of his satisfaction with the conduct of his officers and crew. He particularly mentioned Messrs. de Chavagnac, lieutenant, de Roquefeuil, ensign, Duclos, Boursier, and Mongon, auxiliary officers. M. de Beaumont, who was a captain, was called to command a ship of the line.[100]

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This was the only capture of any significance made during this campaign, which had been hampered by very thick fog. However, this sortie had the effect of driving off the warships and the numerous privateers that infested our coasts. The coastal vessels were able to sail in complete safety from Ushant to the head of the Bay of Biscay.[1] It was upon the squadron's return that the Duke of Chartres disembarked from the *Saint-Esprit* and definitively left naval service. Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers remained, as his official correspondence proves, completely unaware of this decision. Admiral Keppel having appeared in the Channel during the sortie of the French squadron, we were accused, on the other side of the strait, of having deliberately avoided a new engagement. Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers had received orders to give battle to the enemy if he encountered them. On the other hand, since the course of his squadron had been outlined in his instructions, he had neither had to flee nor seek out the English. As for the latter, they could not seriously maintain that they had put to sea with the intention of fighting us. The French squadron had remained for ten days at the opening of the Channel, and had spent twenty days under Cape Finisterre or in the Bay of Biscay. If Admiral Keppel had had the definite intention of joining us, he would have easily succeeded.[2]

1. In a letter dated September 21 from the Count of Orvilliers, we note the following passage relating to several captains of his squadron whose names will reappear in the course of this story: "M. Des Touches is a good captain and one of those with whom I would not hesitate to undertake delicate maneuvers. If you intend me to command the army next year, I ask you, from now on, to designate him to be part of it. The Marquis de Vaudreuil and Mr. de Brach, my two sailors in the first sortie and in the battle, gave me, in the latter, the token of friendship of preferring their posts to the command of a division.

2. Alluding to these rumors, the Count of Orvilliers wrote to the ministry: "I cannot persuade myself that the English ever seriously intended, during our last sortie, to meet us. The King's fleet constantly sailed in the open, with frequent cannon fire signals and fires lit every night. Finally, to return to Brest, we landed on Ushant, where the English fleet was sure to meet us, and where we saw no trace of them."[101]

What was true was that neither in Paris nor in London was a second engagement desired between the forces commanded by Admirals Keppel and d'Orvilliers. The French government was very seriously occupied with a plan to land on England. Troops were being directed to the coasts of Brittany and Normandy, and arrangements were being made to assemble transport vessels in the Channel ports. These preparations would become useless if we did not maintain sufficient naval strength to protect the passage of our soldiers. After the event of July 27, which had satisfied national pride, a new battle seemed inopportune. As for the English, they could, through a series of victories, if not annihilate our navy, at least reduce it to impotence, as had happened during the wars of 1741 and 1756. July 27 had shown that this goal was not easy to achieve. On the other hand, Great Britain had had to meet many demands since the beginning of the war. Despite the immensity of its resources, it had only Keppel's ships left to defend its coastline. This is why it was keen not to compromise these wooden ramparts which were its best safeguard against the perils of an invasion. Detachments of d'Orvilliers' squadron were successively sent on cruises to the opening of the English Channel and to the Bay of Biscay. Frigates and corvettes were given the mission of ensuring the safety of navigation near our coastline. Light divisions were sent to the North Sea, around the British Isles and to the coasts of Portugal and Spain.[102]

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Such was, until the end of 1778, the role of the vessels anchored in the harbor of Brest.[1]

After the recall of its ambassador, England, as we have said above, had sent orders to India to attack us. On July 10, British troops took possession of the city of Chandernagore.[2] In the first days of August, General Munro, at the head of sixteen thousand men, came to lay siege to Pondicherry. On the 10th, Commodore Vernon appeared before the city with a ship, a frigate, and three corvettes. The sixty-four-gun ship, the *Brillant*, the thirty-eight-gun frigate, the *Pourvoyeuse*, and three ships of the East India Company armed for war, the *Sartines*, the *Lauriston*, and the *Brisson*, were in the harbor. These ships immediately set sail to meet the English. After a battle lasting about two hours, the results of which were indecisive, the two divisions separated. Commodore Vernon went to Madras and the French returned to Pondicherry. The French government had not taken the timely step of putting the city of Pondicherry in a position to withstand a siege. The number of troops was insufficient, and the fortifications, demolished in 1763, had not been completely rebuilt.[3] Although the governor, M. de Bellecombe, had the firm resolve to defend himself to the last extremity, the fate of the place was not in doubt.

1. Our cruisers almost always returned with prizes; after a sortie of a few days, Lamotte-Picquet returned with ten ships.

2. Chandernagore was an open city. In the report sent by the governor to the minister to inform him of this event, we read the following: The council of Calcutta having received, on the 7th of July, the news that war had been declared in Europe on the 15th of March, kept it so secret that I was not informed of it until the 10th, at the sight of the English troops who appeared at five o'clock in the morning.

3. At the beginning of 1778, the minister had sent an engineering officer, Captain-Major de Caire, to complete the fortifications of Pondicherry. Having left on the ship *Flamand*, this officer arrived on the Île de France on the 15th of May. The merchant ship, on which he had embarked to reach his destination, had been captured on landing by the English.[103]

Commodore Vernon had received reinforcements that gave him a marked superiority over the French division. Convinced that he would be forced to burn his ships or surrender them to the enemy if he did not hasten to leave, M. de Tronjolly set sail for the Isle of France. One of his ships, the *Sartines*, on a mission along the coast, was captured by the English. On October 17, after a very fine defense, M. de Bellecombe capitulated. General Munro, paying tribute to the conduct of our troops, granted them the most honorable terms. The garrison marched out of the fortress, drums beating, fuses lit, and flags unfurled, taking with them six cannons and two mortars. They were to be sent back to France at the expense of the British government.[1]

A special clause in the 1763 treaty prohibited us from fortifying the islands of Saint-Pierre and Miquelon. The garrison of these two islands consisted of only the number of soldiers strictly necessary to ensure police service. Rear-Admiral Montagu, who commanded the British station in Canada, detached a few frigates to occupy them. In accordance with the instructions of the British government, Commodore Evans, in charge of this expedition, had all the inhabitants taken to France. Their homes, stores, and buildings dedicated to the fishing service were demolished or burned.

1. Mr. de Bellecombe, along with the officers and soldiers of the Pondicherry garrison, were sent back to France on the *Sartines*, armed as a parliamentary ensign, and on board which was an English commissioner. This vessel was racing under full sail towards the Strait of Gibraltar when it was driven off Cape Saint Vincent by the fifty-gun ship *Romney*. The *Sartines* retracted its topsails, furled its topgallants and lower sails, and remained under its topsails, carrying the parliamentary ensign at the masthead. Arriving within cannon range of this vessel, the *Romney* replaced the pennant and white ensign it had previously carried with English colors, and sent its entire broadside to the *Sartines*. The captain and two soldiers were killed and twelve men were wounded. The ship's commander appeared to sincerely regret the harm he had done. Either the captain of the *Romney* had committed an act of brutality unworthy of an officer, or there was such disorder on board his ship that he had arrived within a short distance of the *Sartines* without the position of this vessel having been recognized. In either case, his conduct was without excuse. [104]

These barbaric actions offer a striking contrast to the sentiments of humanity and courtesy that presided over the relations between the two navies during the course of this war.[105]

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BOOK III

Crossing of the French squadron, departing from Toulon, on April 13. - English troops evacuate Philadelphia at the end of June. Admiral Howe withdraws to Sandy Hook. - Arrival of the French at the mouth of the Delaware on July 8. - Our squadron anchors on the coast near New York. - Count d'Estaing heads for Rhode Island. - Planned attack on New Port. - Appearance of Admiral Howe off Rhode Island. - Count d'Estaing sets sail to pursue him. - Dispersal of the two squadrons following a gale. - The French withdraw to Boston. - Departure of our squadron for Martinique. - Capture of Dominica by the Marquis de Bouillé. - The English attack Saint Lucia, which d'Estaing tries in vain to rescue. - The island surrenders to the English. - Arrival of Admiral Byron in the Caribbean Sea.

I

The ships that left Toulon on April 13th crossed the Strait of Gibraltar during the night of May 17th-18th. On the 20th, the captains, having received orders to open the sealed envelopes given to them before departure, learned the squadron's true destination. Our ships were being sent across the Atlantic to rescue the United States of America. Count d'Estaing was to begin hostilities when he was forty leagues west of Cape Saint Vincent. "On the 20th, at eleven o'clock in the morning," the Chevalier de Borda[1] wrote in his journal, "mass was said aboard the *Languedoc* with great pomp. The entire staff attended in full uniform. The flags were displayed, and the command ensign was raised along with the main stern ensign."[106]

1. The Chevalier de Borda was major of the squadron.

The order for reprisals and raids on the English vessels was then published, as was the order for the distribution of prizes. The crew responded with repeated cheers of joy, at various times, with cries of "Long live the King!" The time at which Count d'Estaing left Toulon and the secrecy surrounding his mission gave him the most serious chance of surprising and defeating Howe's squadron. This squadron, as we have said, was held up at the entrance to the Delaware River by General Clinton's position at Philadelphia. However, to achieve our goal, it was essential to arrive on the coast of the United States before the English received reinforcements. A rapid crossing was therefore one of the most essential conditions for success. We will examine whether it was possible, with the ships that made up the squadron, to achieve this result. D'Estaing wrote to the minister by the frigate *Flore*, sent at the end of May to one of the ports on the Spanish coast to bring news of him to Paris: "The *Languedoc* and the *César* have a superior speed. The *Tonnant* is the third sailing ship in the squadron; after this ship come the *Hector* and the *Zélé*. The *Protecteur*, the *Fantasque* and the *Sagittaire* are what are called three company ships. The *Marseillais* and the *Provence* are running mediocrely. As for the *Guerrier* and the *Vaillant*, they are both the worst sailing ships in the squadron. M. de Bougainville is in despair. All the frigates in the squadron are obliged to carry their topgallants when the *Languedoc* and the *César* have only their topsails, reefed; all the *Aimable* can do is follow us." D'Estaing added: "What will give you, Monseigneur, an idea of the slowness to which we are condemned by the *Guerrier* and the *Vaillant*, is that all the merchant ships which joined us only separated from the squadron when they wanted to.[107]

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These two vessels are suffering and putting their masts at risk, by always remaining covered with canvas, while we roll and the sea eats us up, because we constantly have to reef everything to wait for them." Thus, for a reason independent of the merit of the admiral and his captains, our squadron was heading towards the coast of the United States with extreme slowness. The minister had fitted out vessels, but he had not bothered to assemble vessels with the qualities required to operate together.[1] To this fault, absolutely personal to M. de Sartines and his administration, was added a fault for which the responsibility falls entirely on the Count d'Estaing. The latter had carried out very frequent maneuvers during the crossing. Now, a squadron, whether under sail or steam, can only go quickly on the condition that it only performs strictly essential maneuvers. With the forces at his disposal and given the mission he had to fulfill, it is fair to say that Count d'Estaing erred in not sacrificing everything to speed. The French squadron did not make sight of land until the first days of July. A few merchant ships and a privateer carrying twenty-two cannons were captured. The frigate *Mermaid*, finding it impossible to escape the ships that were chasing it, threw itself ashore. On July 8, eighty-seven days after their departure from Toulon, our vessels dropped anchor at the mouth of the Delaware. We have precisely indicated the true causes of the slowness of this crossing not only because they contain a lesson that has not lost its value, but also because they allow us to peremptorily refute the reproaches of disobedience and indiscipline from which d'Estaing's squadron did not escape any more than d'Orvilliers' fleet.

1. It is needless to say that this observation is as true today as it was in 1778. Squadrons must be homogeneous, otherwise we place in the hands of admirals instruments from which they will have difficulty making use.[108]

It has been said that several captains, out of hatred for their general, had made a guilty game of either reducing sail or allowing themselves to be undersailed during the dark nights. In d'Estaing's correspondence, a very voluminous one, for this general officer wrote a great deal, one finds nothing that could serve, I will not say as a basis, but as a pretext for this accusation. Indeed, while Count d'Estaing complained about the progress of his ships, he praised the zeal and goodwill of his captains.

The perils to which a war with France exposed Howe's squadron had not escaped the attention of the English government. Before hostilities began, orders had been sent to General Clinton to evacuate Philadelphia and withdraw to New York. The British troops had moved on June 22, closely followed by the Americans. On the 30th, they had reached Middletown, a small town located on the coast, in New York Bay. The English squadron, held up by the calms at the entrance to the Delaware, had only arrived off Middletown the day before, that is to say, on June 29. Clinton's small army had crossed to Sandy Hook, and from there, it had been transported by sea to New York. Admiral Howe had left the mouth of the Delaware with six sixty-four-gun ships, three fifty-gun ships, and transports carrying the army's heaviest supplies, munitions, and baggage. If Count d'Estaing had encountered the English squadron, either at anchor or at sea, he would certainly have defeated it. In the first case as in the second, the British troops, deprived of the support of the fleet, would have been powerless to reach New York. It was because General Clinton had recognized the difficulty of going directly to this city that he had led his soldiers to Middletown. On his way, he had an engagement, not with the whole but with a part of the forces detached in his pursuit, and he had suffered a setback.[109]

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If, upon arriving at Middletown, he had not found Howe's squadron, passage to Sandy Hook was impossible, and he had no other recourse but to retrace his steps. Before reaching New York, he would have been surrounded and forced to surrender at discretion.

After sending the *Chimère* to Philadelphia to deliver Mr. Gérard, our minister to Congress, Count d'Estaing put to sea again, and arrived in sight of Sandy Hook on July 10. Admiral Howe had been warned for several days of the presence of a French squadron on the coast. Probably assuming that we had no intention of attacking it, he had not taken up any defensive position. The passes, which lead from the open sea into the interior of New York Bay, are not very deep. Count d'Estaing, not knowing whether deep-draft vessels like the *Languedoc* and the *César* could safely cross them, refused to make any determination in this regard before consulting the pilots. Consequently, he anchored the squadron a few miles from New York, off a small town called Shrewsbury. The question that preoccupied the commander-in-chief required a prompt solution. The English, having recovered from their surprise, were deploying the greatest activity to make up for lost time and establish themselves, with the help of the resources offered to them by the New York arsenal, in a strong position. The American pilots did not arrive on board the *Languedoc* until July 16. When they learned that our vessels were drawing twenty-three, twenty-four, and twenty-five feet of water, none of them wanted to assume the responsibility of leading them inside Sandy Hook. They claimed that there was only twenty-three English feet of water in the channel, or twenty-one and a half French feet of water. M. de Ribiers, lieutenant of the ship, appointed by the commander-in-chief to carry out soundings with the pilots, found only twenty-two feet of water on the bar.[1]

1. The major of the squadron who had been on land returned at eleven o'clock, having safely crossed the bar. He was accompanied by Lieutenant-Colonel Laurens, son of the President of Congress and aide-de-camp to General Washington, whose letters he brought, and who at the same time brought several sworn American pilots sent by Congress, at the request of Count d'Estaing, to bring our ships inside Sandy Look. These pilots, having learned that our ships were drawing twenty-three, twenty-four, and twenty-five feet of water, unanimously decided that it would be impossible for them to enter us, having all agreed that there are only twenty-three English feet of high water in the channel, which is twenty-one and a half feet of French water. As the general was only reluctant to follow their report and told them that he would lighten the ships as much as possible, these pilots asked to go and sound the bar in the middle of the channel and that they would be accompanied by an officer who would check what was found. The general accordingly appointed M. de Ribiers who left with them..... M. de Ribiers reported to the general that the pilots sounded in the middle and along the entire length of the channel and that they found, at low tide, only three and a half fathoms. (*Journal du Languedoc* of July 16.)[110]

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On July 20, Count d'Estaing gathered the squadron's captains on board, and in their presence, he offered the American pilots 150,000 francs if they agreed to join the squadron. The latter having again affirmed that it was impossible to cross the passes with our ships, this project was definitively abandoned. Even if no maritime considerations had opposed the execution of this enterprise, it would have been difficult, on July 20, to attempt it with any chance of success. The crews of the English squadron had been supplemented by sailors taken from merchant ships and soldiers from Clinton's army. Admiral Howe had added several transports to his squadron, on which he had placed cannons. All the vessels capable of offering a broadside to our ships formed a very tight line, the ends of which were defended by batteries. Under these conditions, we were not sure of victory, and, in case of failure, we had no retreat. Congress proposed to the commander of our squadron to attack, in concert with the Americans, the city of New-Port, located in Rhode Island. Count d'Estaing, who wished to find the opportunity to render services to our allies, agreed.[111]

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The French squadron set sail on July 22 and headed south.[1] As soon as it was out of sight of the English, the Count d'Estaing set sail for this new destination.

II

Rhode Island is located in a vast bay cut into the coastline of the state that bears that name. The island's main direction is north and south. The inlet that separates its eastern part from the mainland is called the Sea Channel or Eastern Passage. Conanicut Island, located parallel to Rhode Island, faces it to the west. The main passage is located between these two islands. Between Conanicut Island and the mainland, there is a third channel, called the Western or Narraganset Channel. The English forces, commanded by General Pigot, were concentrated at Newport. It had been agreed that General Sullivan would land in the northern part of the island. The French squadron was charged with ensuring the free passage of American troops. The Count d'Estaing was also to enter the main channel and attack the city's fortifications from behind. On July 29, our ships dropped anchor at the opening of the main channel. The *Fantasque* and the *Sagittaire* were charged with monitoring the Narraganset channel. The frigates the *Aimable*, the *Alcmène*, and the corvette the *Stanley*, anchored at the entrance to the eastern channel, in which there was no bottom except for the corvettes. The occupation of the three exits leading to the sea cut off the retreat of the English ships that were in the interior of the bay.

1. On the 20th, the general had the commanders assembled, since the pilots did not want to bring the squadron in. He had sent M. de Ribiers, a naval lieutenant, to sound the channel, and this officer had found only twenty to twenty-two feet of water on the bar. Count d'Estaing offered the pilots, before the assembled council, one hundred and fifty thousand francs if they would take charge of bringing the squadron in; they refused. The general decided, on the advice of the council, to set sail from this harbor to head for Rhode Island. (*Journal of the squadron's major*.)[112]

The officer in command, seeing it impossible to escape, landed the provisions, artillery, and munitions, and stood ready to destroy them as we approached. At daybreak on August 5, the *Sagittaire* and the *Fantasque* set sail to sail up the West Pass. After rounding the tip of Conanicut Island, they dropped anchor in the Middle Pass. Several enemy ships, anchored north of the position taken by the two vessels, were given over to the flames. We will not forget an act of generosity that does honor to the character of our nation. Commander de Suffren, whose seniority called him to command the *Sagittaire* and the *Fantasque*, signaled against firing on the boats that were bringing the English crews ashore. The *Protecteur* and the *Provence* replaced the *Sagittaire* and the *Fantasque* at the entrance to Narraganset Pass. The Count d'Estaing waited to enter the main channel until General Sullivan had completed his preparations. Having learned on August 8, 1778, that the Americans were ready to pass onto Rhode Island, he crossed the channel with eight vessels. The English opened a very lively fire on our ships, to which they responded energetically. The squadron anchored as soon as it was out of cannon range of the forts, and made the necessary arrangements to anchor at the first order. Count d'Estaing wanted to be able to repel Admiral Howe, if the latter, after receiving reinforcements, appeared to attack him. The *Fantasque* and the *Sagittaire* rallied the squadron in the evening. The *Protecteur* and the *Provence*, charged with the surveillance of the Narraganset channel, came to anchor the next morning. The English had sunk the ships that were at anchor in front of New Port, when we appeared in the channel. On the night of August 8-9, General Sullivan landed in the north of the island with ten thousand men and a large field artillery.[113]

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On the morning of the 9th, four thousand soldiers and sailors, taken from the squadron's ships, were put ashore on Conanicut Island. This corps, under the direct command of Lieutenant General d'Estaing, was intended to march with the American troops to attack the English lines. While waiting for the time to act, this personnel had been gathered on Conanicut Island to be organized and trained.

Admiral Howe had felt great satisfaction when he saw our squadron disappear over the horizon on July 22. He was expecting ships that would inevitably have fallen into our hands if we had remained anchored off Shrewsbury any longer. But fortune, which in war, as in all things, must be allowed for, had favored our adversaries. From July 22 to 30, four vessels, the *Cornwall* of seventy-four, the *Raisonnable* of sixty-four, the *Centurion* and the *Renown* of fifty, had arrived separately at Sandy Hook. The first, which belonged to Admiral Byron's squadron, had been separated from his fleet during a storm; two came from Halifax and the last arrived from the West Indies. It was not long before news reached New York of the double attack with which General Pigot was threatened. The situation of the British troops was particularly serious in that, having no retreat, they were reduced, in the event of failure, to laying down their arms. Admiral Howe would have incurred a grave responsibility by not doing everything in his power to prevent the recurrence of a new Saratoga convention. He left Sandy Hook with thirteen vessels, one of seventy-four, seven of sixty-four, and five of fifty, seven frigates, and several transports carrying troops, provisions, and munitions. The English admiral had been exactly informed of the dispositions that Count d'Estaing had made upon his arrival off Rhode Island. He knew that several vessels had been detached in the eastern and western passes, while the bulk of the squadron was anchored at the opening of the main channel.[114]

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Assuming that nothing had changed in this situation, he would attack us with the advantage of numbers. If we had crossed the channel, he could have easily landed the relief supplies intended for the garrison south of the island. In the latter case, he hoped to carry out his operation without a fight. The entrance to the main channel, formed by the tips of Rhode Island and Conanicut, being very narrow, a squadron anchored off New Port can only reach the open sea if the winds are from the north. Now, these winds are those that blow least frequently during the month of August. When Howe appeared in sight of Rhode Island on the 9th, he spotted the French squadron in the main channel. He signaled the transports to drop anchor near the coast, and remained under sail with the warships. The sudden appearance of the enemy changed Count d'Estaing's plans. The men and equipment were re-embarked, and the squadron made arrangements to repel the English, in the event that they attempted to enter the bay. On August 10, at seven o'clock in the morning, the breeze, by a very rare exception at that time of year, having established itself in the north-northeast, the fleet set sail, cutting the cables. Two hours later, it was out of the channel, making for the enemy. Admiral Howe, surprised by the speed of our movements, recalled the ships that were at anchor, and headed out to sea, covering itself with canvas. He wanted to avoid a disadvantageous engagement, and, on the other hand, he wanted to take advantage of this circumstance to draw us away from Rhode Island. The day passed without any particular incident. Our squadron approached the English, but it did not gain enough ground to force them to fight. The next day, in the afternoon, we had hopes of joining them, when, around five o'clock in the evening, the breeze, which had freshened rapidly, blew in a gale. The two squadrons were dispersed, and, at daybreak on the 13th, Count d'Estaing's ship found itself alone.[115]

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His bowsprit having broken, the entire masting fell; he also had the misfortune of breaking his rudder. The *Languedoc* was in this situation when, shortly before sunset, it was attacked by the *Renown*, a fifty-gun ship. The captain of the *Renown*, after reconnoitering the French ship's position, maneuvered to bombard it from the rear. The *Languedoc* defended itself with its retreating guns until darkness ended the battle. On the 14th, during the day, all the ships, with the exception of the *César*, rallied to the commander-in-chief's flag. The weather having become manageable, Count d'Estaing had the squadron anchor to allow the *Languedoc* to install a makeshift mast and the other ships to repair their most serious damage. The *Marseillais*, after losing its foremast and bowsprit, had been attacked by a fifty-gun ship, the *Isis*, which had been forced to withdraw. The squadron set sail on August 17, and anchored on the 20th off Rhode Island. Admiral Byron had left Plymouth on June 12, 1778, with thirteen ships, to reinforce Howe, who was endangered by d'Estaing's departure. Assailed during his crossing by heavy weather, his squadron had been dispersed. Some of his ships, including his own, had put into Halifax; the others had continued their route to New York, which they had entered a few days earlier. The Marquis de la Fayette hastened to come aboard the *Languedoc* to bring this news to the Count d'Estaing. However much the French general wanted to keep the promise he had made to the American authorities, he found himself forced to abandon the Rhode Island expedition. The superiority of the enemy and the state of his ships, especially the *Languedoc* and the *Marseillais*, imposed other duties on him. He gathered the general officers and captains on board to consult them on the appropriate course of action.[116]

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All were in favor of going to Boston, where the squadron could find resources and where it could make its repairs more safely than at Newport. The members of the council added that we must hasten to leave if we did not want to find the English in our path. There was no doubt that Admiral Howe, having the advantage of numbers at that moment, would make every effort to join us. General Sullivan, who had established himself, during our absence, opposite the English lines, impatiently awaited our return to continue his operations and attack Newport. He was extremely disappointed upon learning that our departure had been decided, but his entreaties to get Count d'Estaing to reverse this decision remained without result. The next day, the 21st, the French squadron headed for Boston, where it arrived on the 28th. The *Caesar* had been at this anchorage for eight days, a rendezvous assigned to the fleet in case of separation when it left Newport on August 10. This vessel had had a fairly lively engagement with the fifty-gun *Preston*, manned by Commodore Hotham. The presence of two enemy vessels and the breaking of the rudder wheel had decided the *Caesar* to move away. The *Languedoc*, the *Marseillais*, and the *Protecteur*, which had major repairs to make, dropped anchor near the city, while the rest of the squadron anchored in Nantasket Bay. The islands, in the middle of which are the passes leading to the harbor, were not fortified. Count d'Estaing hastened to take the necessary measures to make our position as solid as the position of the place and the resources of the squadron permitted. The garrisons of the ships and detachments of sailors, landed on George and Nantasket Islands, immediately worked on the construction of batteries intended to defend the anchorage. On August 31, sixteen English vessels were sighted offshore. Although only three days had passed since our arrival, the defense of the harbor had made serious progress.[117]

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On September 1st, we had six mortars and two batteries on George Island, one of eleven twenty-four-pounder cannons, and the other of eight eighteen- and twenty-four-pounders. The latter battered the large channel and the narrow channel located north of George Island. Thirty eighteen- and twenty-four-pounder cannons, positioned on Nantasket Island, fired in the direction of the large channel. Batteries, of lesser importance, had already been started on some of the numerous islands surrounding the harbor. The French squadron, far from fearing Howe's attack, eagerly desired it. Count d'Estaing had left *Languedoc*, anchored near Boston, and had set his flag on the *Caesar*. On board all the vessels, arrangements were made to present a broadside to the enemy. After reconnoitering the strength of our position, Admiral Howe set sail for Rhode Island.

The departure of the French squadron on August 21 had placed General Sullivan in a difficult position from which he emerged very fortunately. After dispatching his heavy artillery, he retreated in good order, stopping to fight when pressed too closely. By August 31, he was safely on the mainland with his troops and equipment. The Americans had to congratulate themselves on the speed with which they had executed their move. On September 1, transports, escorted by several warships, brought General Clinton with four thousand men to Newport. If the English, after the return of Howe's squadron following the gale of August 11, had displayed an activity equal to that of the American general, the latter, blocked from the sea, pursued by General Clinton with forces twice his own, would have run the greatest risks. Admiral Howe, after having touched at Rhode Island, where the events we have just reported rendered his presence useless, returned to New York. General Sullivan had not admitted the legitimacy of the motives which had determined Count d'Estaing to withdraw to Boston.[118]

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Forgetting the reserve imposed on him by the situation in his country and the duties he performed, he had protested, in inappropriate terms, against the conduct of the commander of our squadron. News of this disagreement spread very quickly throughout the northern provinces, to which the militias who had fought under this general's command belonged, and it had stirred public opinion against us. A popular movement, in which two officers of the squadron, Messrs. de Saint-Sauveur[1] and le Pléville le Peley, were seriously wounded, broke out in Boston. The wisdom of the American authorities, the calm and moderation of Count d'Estaing, calmed this excitement. Generals Washington, Gates, Greene, and several important figures hastened to disavow General Sullivan. These difficulties had reached such proportions that the Congress, regarding its intervention as necessary, adopted the following resolution: "Congress retains the highest sentiment of the zeal and attachment that Count d'Estaing has shown to the cause of the United States on several occasions, and particularly in the noble and generous offer he made to come to Boston, at the head of his troops, to cooperate in the reduction of Rhode Island." The news of the arrival on the continent of American troops had rendered useless this proposal, which had actually been made by Count d'Estaing. It is permissible to add that it was not very prudent. How would we have defended ourselves, on the harbor of Nantasket, against an attack by the English squadron, if the elite of our crews had left, by land, to fight on the island of Rhode Island?

England did not only have to wage war at sea, it had to defend its soil, its colonies, and continue the struggle engaged with the American people.

1. Mr. de Saint-Sauveur succumbed to his injuries.[119]

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To meet all these requirements, a considerable army was necessary. However, the British Isles provided few soldiers, and the resources offered by Hesse and some other parts of Germany for the recruitment of English troops were limited. Taking advantage of the approach of winter, a season during which war operations in the northern United States underwent a forced slowdown, the court in London ordered General Clinton to send 5,000 men to the West Indies. These troops were to leave Sandy Hook in the first days of November, on fifty transport ships escorted by Commodore Hotham with five vessels. Admiral Byron, the new commander-in-chief of England's naval forces, had arrived in New York on September 16. He arrived off Boston at the end of October to cover the commodore's passage. Following a very violent gale, all the English ships were dispersed; Some returned to New York and the others put into port at Rhode Island. The *Somerset*, of seventy-four, ran aground at the entrance to the Chesapeake, and her crew was taken prisoner. Count d'Estaing, reduced to inaction by the superiority of the enemy, was only waiting for a favorable opportunity to go to the Antilles. Taking advantage of the distance of the English, he set sail for Martinique. On November 25, three ships, belonging to the convoy that had left Sandy Hook in the first days of the month, were chased and captured by our frigates. This encounter informed us of what we were completely ignorant of, that is to say, the departure of Commodore Hotham with considerable forces for the Caribbean Sea. The captains of the captured ships had separated the previous night from the English squadron, but they did not know its destination. The route they were following, at the time we saw them, took them to windward of all the islands. There was reason to believe that the English were heading for Barbados, but Count d'Estaing was convinced that they were going to Antigua.[120]

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He made sail in order to reach the enemy, whom we were obviously very close to. On December 6, the French squadron arrived at the latitude of La Désirade, the landing point for ships bound for Antigua. After cruising for forty-eight hours off this island without sighting the enemy, Count d'Estaing decided to head for Fort Royal Bay, where he anchored on December 9.

During his recent stay on the coast of North America, Lieutenant General d'Estaing had not carried out any actual war operations. He had arrived too late to surprise the English at the mouth of the Delaware. The pilots' stubborn refusal to lead our ships to the anchorage at Sandy Hook had prevented him from attacking Admiral Howe. Finally, the Rhode Island expedition, barely begun, had been abandoned. However, we had already rendered very real services to the cause of the United States. It was the attitude of the Versailles cabinet that had drawn the attention of the English ministry to the dangers to which Howe was exposed. In giving this admiral the order to leave his position, the court of London had been obliged to prescribe the evacuation of Philadelphia, since Clinton's army could not do without the support of the navy. It was therefore correct to say that this result was entirely due to the French alliance. Commissioners, equipped with full powers to negotiate the reestablishment of the union between England and its former colonies, had landed in New York at the beginning of June 1778. This was a last effort by the British ministry to prevent Congress from ratifying the treaties concluded with us. The abandonment of a city of the importance of Philadelphia had shown to the less far-sighted that it was weakness and not generosity that had inspired the statesmen of Great Britain to take this apparently conciliatory step. The Americans felt all the stronger in rejecting the London court's proposals for accommodation because they were certain of being supported by France.[121]

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Indeed, the treaties signed in Paris on February 6, 1778, had been delivered to Congress on May 2 by Simon Deane[1], who had boarded the frigate *Sensible*, which had left Brest on March 8. The arrival of Lieutenant General d'Estaing, by increasing Congress's confidence in the ultimate success of the insurrection, had deprived the English commissioners of any hope of succeeding in their mission. The corvette *Stanley*, the privateers *Rose*[2] and *Fanny*, and eighteen merchant ships had been captured by our vessels. The sloop *York* had fallen into our hands, but was recaptured by the English. The twenty-eight-gun frigate *Mermaid*, about to be joined by the *Fantasque* and the *Sagittaire*, had been thrown ashore on July 8 at the mouth of the Delaware. At Rhode Island, the forty-gun frigate *Grand-Duc*, the thirty-two-gun frigates *Orphée, Larck, Junon*, and *Flore*, the twenty-eight-gun *Cerbère*, the corvettes *Kings Ficher* and *Falcon*, and several smaller vessels had been burned or sunk by the English. The corvette *Sénégal* and a bomb galliot had been captured by our frigates after the gale of August 11.

III

The frigate *Concorde*, arriving in Martinique on August 17, brought to the Governor General of the Windward Islands news of the hostile acts committed by Admiral Keppel and the King's order to retaliate against the English.

1. Simon Deane was the brother of Silas Deane, one of the three envoys from the United States to the court of Versailles. It was the latter who had taken passage on the *Languedoc*.

2. This privateer, armed with twenty-two guns, was sighted by the squadron on July 5. The *Languedoc* signaled the frigate *Engageante* to chase it away. The *Rose* only lowered its flag after a very stiff resistance. This vessel was in such a state that it was forced to sink it. The privateer had a large part of its crew disabled; seven men of the *Engageante's* crew were wounded.[122]

Between Martinique and Guadeloupe, and within sight of each of these islands, lies Dominica. The Minister of the Navy instructed the Marquis de Bouillé to seize every opportunity to seize this island, which we had ceded to Great Britain in 1763. The English had taken particular care to fortify it, but due to the extent of the works they had constructed and the artillery with which they were armed, the defense required a large number of personnel. At the end of August 1778, the garrison, due to a negligence on the part of the British authorities that was difficult to understand, numbered barely a few hundred regular soldiers. The Marquis de Bouillé, informed of this situation, resolved to immediately carry out M. de Sartines' orders. The naval forces at his disposal were inferior to those of the enemy, but he intended to act with such promptness that the commander of the English station, Rear Admiral Barrington, would arrive too late to oppose his designs. On September 6, after sunset, twelve hundred soldiers and a thousand Creole volunteers, white and colored, were embarked on the frigates *La Tourterelle, La Diligente, L'Amphitrite,* the corvette *L'Étourdie* and a flotilla of transports. Our troops, put ashore the following morning, occupied, without firing a shot, the positions covering the island's capital. The governor, wishing to spare the small town of Roseau the consequences of an assault, asked to capitulate. The French general treated the inhabitants with the greatest generosity. He decided that they would retain, until peace, the administrative and judicial regime under which they lived. If Dominica remained French, settlers who did not agree to change their nationality would be free to leave the island, taking with them whatever they possessed. No violence was committed against persons or property, and even the enemies paid tribute to the strict discipline observed by our soldiers.[123]

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One hundred and sixty-four cannons, twenty-four mortars, food, ammunition, and military effects fell into our hands. After designating the troops who were to occupy our new conquest, Mr. de Bouillé returned to Martinique. When Rear-Admiral Barrington learned of the attack against Dominica, he hastened to come to the aid of the island, but upon his arrival, the French flag was flying over all the forts and our ships had disappeared. He returned to Barbados, awaiting with the greatest impatience the reinforcements announced to him from America. He intended to attempt some operation whose success would mitigate the effect that the loss of Dominica was expected to produce in England. Unaware that Count d'Estaing had left Boston, he considered himself master of the sea, and consequently free to go wherever he deemed appropriate. He set his sights on Saint Lucia, the possession of which was of particular importance to the British navy. From this island, located a short distance from Martinique, the movements of the French forces anchored in Fort Royal Bay could be monitored. On December 11, twenty-four hours after Commodore Hotham's arrival in Barbados, Admiral Barrington set sail for Saint Lucia. He had with him seven ships and a convoy carrying four thousand men. The troops landed on the 13th near Culde-Sac Cove, and immediately seized the heights overlooking this small bay. This first advantage gave the English a good anchorage. The next day, the enemy marched on Morne Fortuné, the island's capital, which the governor, M. de Micoud, evacuated for fear of being surrounded. The French garrison, composed of a few hundred soldiers and militiamen, withdrew into the mountains. The English immediately headed for Carénage Bay, located three miles north of Cul-de-Sac Cove.[124]

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Both ends of the bay, as well as Morne de la Vierge, a fortified position overlooking the anchorage, were occupied. By the evening of December 14, Generals Grant and Meadows, who commanded the expeditionary force, were in control of the entire coastline, stretching from the northern tip of Carénage Bay to the southern edge of Cul-de-Sac Cove. These events had occurred with such rapidity that the French had not had time, or had neglected, in the haste of their retreat, to spike their artillery and destroy the munitions.

On December 13, an American privateer brought news to Martinique of Rear Admiral Barrington's sortie. It was believed, according to the report of the captain of this ship, that the English were heading for Grenada, but on the 14th, Count d'Estaing became certain that they were attacking Saint Lucia. Since war was imminent, M. de Bouillé had made no particular arrangements to put this island in a state of defense. It was not that the Governor-General of the Windward Islands lacked activity and foresight. He possessed these two qualities to the highest degree, but, in seizing Dominica and abandoning Saint Lucia to his own forces, he had strictly complied with the minister's orders. Whatever M. de Sartines' instructions on this point, Count d'Estaing could all the less allow the English to conquer Saint Lucia, in view of his squadron, since the attack directed against this island seemed to provide him with the opportunity to achieve great success. Indeed, if he defeated Rear-Admiral Barrington, the small English army would remain on the island without resources and without supplies. In this situation, it would have been difficult for it to resist the garrisons of our colonies in the Antilles, which, being masters of the sea, it would have been easy for us to lead to Saint Lucia.[125]

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In order to bring greater unity to war operations, the government had entrusted Count d'Estaing with military command of the Windward Islands. This general officer dispatched ships to Guadeloupe and Dominica to capture part of the garrison of these two islands. He set sail on the 14th with the squadron, on which were embarked the troops assembled at Fort Royal and the Creole volunteers, and arrived in sight of Saint Lucia that evening. At daybreak on the 15th, he headed for Carenage Bay, which he believed was still in our possession. A very heavy fire, which greeted our ships when they were within cannon range, informed Count d'Estaing of the true state of affairs. It was no longer a question of rescuing the island; it was necessary to reconquer it. He steered towards Cul-de-Sac Cove with the intention of fighting the English squadron. Rear-Admiral Barrington, whose ships were without order the day before, had worked all night to rectify his position. His ships were lined up in a single line, a little inside the entrance, which is very narrow, covering the transport ships. At several points, the enemy was erecting batteries to defend the anchorage. The Count d'Estaing passed a first time off the bay, exchanging cannonballs with Rear-Admiral Barrington's ships. He repeated the same maneuver a few hours later, but this cannonade only caused minor damage on both sides. The commander of our squadron, who did not seem to be following a carefully considered plan, abandoned the attack on the English squadron and came to drop anchor in Choc Cove. Then deciding to seize Carénage Bay, he landed the expeditionary force. On the 18th, the French, divided into three columns, commanded by Lieutenant General d'Estaing, the Marquis de Bouillé and the Count de Lowendal, set out. Whether our troops had lost their way, or had followed unfaithful guides, the three detachments emerged onto an open area, located at the foot of Morne de la Vierge.[126]

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Our soldiers, although overcome with fatigue, marched against the enemy with the greatest vigor. The English, sheltered behind entrenchments defended by a large artillery, occupied a very strong position. After a struggle lasting several hours, the French were forced to withdraw; they had forty-one officers and eight hundred men out of action. Count d'Estaing returned to the idea of attacking the English squadron. No doubt realizing the futility of the engagement that had taken place on the 15th, he resolved to fight the enemy ships side by side. He could only carry out this plan if the east-northeast to east-southeast breeze, which usually blew, penetrated into the bay. On the 24th, the frigate *Iphigénie* having signaled that the breeze was reaching the English ships, the squadron received the order to sail. It was three o'clock in the afternoon when our ships were in line. Either because Count d'Estaing found the day too late, or because he doubted once again the success of this enterprise, he returned to the anchorage of Anse du Choc. Having learned, on the 28th, that Admiral Byron was expected in the Windward Islands, he decided to move away. The troops were re-embarked during the night of the 28th to the 29th, without the enemy thinking of worrying us, and the squadron set sail for Martinique, where it anchored on December 30th. After the departure of the fleet, the governor of Saint Lucia, M. de Micoud, capitulated.[1] Since the beginning of hostilities, our adversaries had obtained only insignificant advantages, more than offset by the loss of Dominica.

1. Although it may seem strange that the minister should have given, as we have said above, the order to abandon Saint Lucia to its own forces, the fact cannot be doubted. The Marquis de Bouillé wrote to Marshal de Castries on September 11, 1781: "As for M. de Micoud, I personally have no reason to complain. It was only as a result of the secret and written orders of M. de Sartines that I abandoned Saint Lucia to its own forces and took it upon myself to attack Dominica. One was won and the other lost, which should have been the case without any fault on the part of the subordinate agents." "The French government did not believe that the war would last long. It wanted to retake the island of Dominica, located between Martinique and Guadeloupe, but it was probably assumed in Paris that the English would ask for Saint Lucia in exchange. The Versailles cabinet had undoubtedly thought that the best way to achieve this result was to conquer Dominica and let the English take Saint Lucia. At the time of the peace treaties, each would have kept what it possessed.[127]

The capture of Saint Lucia, accompanied by the failure of Count d'Estaing, caused great satisfaction in England. Admiral Barrington and Generals Grant and Meadows had conducted themselves in this affair with promptness and resolution. All justice must be done to them, but the truth also compelled us to recognize that our own faults had played a large part in the success of our adversaries. The capture, on November 25, of three ships belonging to Commodore Hotham's convoy was a stroke of good fortune for the French squadron. We learned that we had before us a fleet of transports carrying 5,000 men to the Antilles, escorted by five vessels, including three of 64 and two of 50. If we succeeded in joining them, we would have won an easy victory that would have left the British possessions in the Windward Islands defenseless. In his conjectures about the direction taken by Commodore Hotham, Count d'Estaing was mistaken. He admitted that the commodore was going to Antigua, although the route of the English transports, at the time of their capture, was contrary to this supposition, and he lost two days before the Désirade. Arriving at Fort-Royal, he kept his frigates near him, instead of using them to find out the destination of the ships he had pursued. After having displayed the greatest activity to go to the aid of the island, he showed the greatest indecision when he found himself facing the enemy. In a hurry to finish, he wanted to take, by a surprise, very solid positions defended by good troops and cannon. By engaging in this affair under these conditions and on terrain that we had not sufficiently reconnoitered, we were bound to be beaten.[128]

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As for the sea attack, it was not conducted with the energy that would have ensured success. We have, on this point, decisive testimony from Suffren, who commanded the *Fantasque* in the squadron. He wrote to the commander-in-chief on December 18: "Sir, it is the duty of a captain to whom the King has done the honor of entrusting a ship, to declare that, having one hundred and fifty men less in his crew, he is in no condition either to maneuver or to fight. I would prefer to serve as a volunteer, on land, under your orders, than to command a ship in this state. At least, having only myself to answer for, my honor would be in my own hands." Circumstances having forced us to disembark our soldiers, if you deemed it appropriate, we could overcome the very great inconvenience of having a disarmed squadron by taking replacements from the privateers, frigates, and transports...."

"... I take the liberty of sending you a memorandum on our situation. As far as I would be from giving advice to a general, I believe it is the duty of a good citizen to share ideas that one believes are useful for the good of the State, especially to a general who has shown me confidence, kindness, and in whose glory I am interested. Despite the lack of follow-up to the two cannonades of December 15th, and the unfortunate failure suffered by our troops, we can still expect success. But the only way to get some is to vigorously attack the squadron which, given our superiority, could not hold despite their fortifications on land, the effect of which would become nil if we boarded them or anchored on their buoys. If we delay, a thousand circumstances can save them. They can take advantage of the night to leave, abandoning people in a position that would cover their retreat. There are times, such as that of the night before last, when all the vigilance of the cruisers could not prevent their escape.[129]

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Besides, the squadron being disarmed, it is in no condition to maneuver or fight. What would happen if Admiral Byron's squadron arrived? What would become of the ships without men, without a general? Their defeat would entail the loss of the fleet and that of the colony. Let us destroy this squadron; the land army, lacking everything, in a bad country, would be forced to surrender. Let Byron come after; he will please us. I believe it is unnecessary to point out that, for this attack, we need men and well-coordinated arrangements with those who must carry them out." This letter, each line of which contains a military lesson, borrows from the personality of the one who wrote it an importance that we need not dwell on. After reading it, we will remain convinced that the command of this squadron had not been entrusted to hands capable of exercising it.[1]

1. During this unfortunate expedition, Count d'Estaing had consulted General de Bouillé and the ship captains de Bougainville and de Suffren. We must add that he had not followed their advice. The Marquis de Bouillé, on his return from this expedition, wanted to return to Europe.[130]

BOOK IV

Admiral Byron, coming from the coast of North America, joins Admiral Barrington. - Count d'Estaing remains on the defensive. - The French and English squadrons receive reinforcements. - Vaudreuil's division anchors in Fort Royal Bay, after conquering Senegal. - Capture of Saint Vincent Island. - Arrival of Lamotte-Picquet with six ships. - The French capture Grenada. - Battle of Byron's and d'Estaing's squadrons. - The English withdraw to Saint Kitts. - Capture of the Cariaçou Islands and the Lesser Grenadines. - Count d'Estaing anchors successively at Guadeloupe and Saint Domingue. - He heads towards the coast of North America. - Defeat of the French and Americans off Savannah. - Return to Europe of the ships departing from Toulon, April 13, 1778. - Lamotte-Picquet's engagement with Admiral Parker's squadron at the entrance to Fort Royal Bay.

I

Count d'Estaing learned in early January that Admiral Byron had arrived in Barbados. He set sail on the 11th and headed for Saint Lucia to reconnoiter the English position. Our frigates having counted fifteen enemy vessels at anchor, he became certain that Admirals Barrington and Byron had linked up. On February 19, Count de Grasse, coming from Brest with the ships *Dauphin Royal*, *Magnifique*, *Robuste*, and *Vengeur*, anchored in Fort Royal Bay. Admiral Byron having been joined, at the same time, by four vessels under Commodore Rowley, the relationship existing between our forces and those of the enemy was not altered. Count d'Estaing determined to remain on the defensive, until he had received the reinforcements he expected from Europe.[131]

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Squadron Leader de Vaudreuil[1] arrived in Martinique on April 26 with the *Fendant* and the *Sphinx*. The fifty-gun *Fier* had entered Fort Royal Bay the day before with a convoy. The English squadron, which had also received reinforcements, continued to have superior numbers over ours. Whether due to circumspection on the part of Count d'Estaing, or because he could find nothing to attempt with the forces at his disposal, the French squadron remained motionless at its anchors. In the first days of June, a merchant fleet, bound for the ports of Great Britain, was assembled at Saint-Christophe, awaiting an escort announced by Admiral Byron. The presence of our ships in Martinique convinced the English admiral not to divide his forces. He set sail from Saint Lucia on June 6th with his entire squadron to lead this convoy out of the disembarkations. He assumed that the French, unaware of how long his absence might last, would not dare to undertake anything. Count d'Estaing, very promptly informed of his adversary's movements, resolved to seize Saint Vincent. The Caribs, who occupied part of the island, were impatiently enduring English domination.

1. Squadron Leader de Vaudreuil had set sail from Quiberon on December 25th, 1778, with the vessels *Sphinx* and *Fendant*, the frigates *Nymphe* and *Résolue*, the corvettes *Épervier*, *Lunette* and *Lively*, and two schooners. Troops, placed under the command of the Duke of Lauzun, were embarked on these vessels. The conquest of Senegal and the destruction of the English settlements between Gorée and Sierra Leone was the goal assigned to this expedition. The islands of Gorée and Saint-Louis were taken at the beginning of February. After this first success, the Marquis de Vaudreuil set sail for the Antilles, and the Duke of Lauzun returned to Europe with the troops who were not intended to garrison the colony. The execution of the second part of the government's instructions was entrusted to Lieutenant Pontevez Gien, captain of the *Résolue*. This officer, having under his command the *Nymphe*, the *Épervier* and the two schooners, seized the forts and trading posts that the English possessed in the Gambia and in the Sierra Leone River. At the beginning of April, the cutter and the schooners returned to Senegal, and the *Nymphe* left for the Antilles. The *Resolute* cannonaded the various points occupied by the enemy in the Gulf of Guinea, and she evacuated them when the state of the sea allowed her crew to go ashore.[132]

They had sent an agent to Martinique to assure us that they would fight alongside us the day we attacked Saint Vincent. This mission was entrusted to Lieutenant Trolong du Rumain, captain of the corvette *Lively*. This officer set sail from Fort Royal Bay on June 9th with three corvettes and two schooners, on which four hundred Creole soldiers or volunteers had taken passage. The expedition, hampered by calms and currents, did not arrive in sight of Saint Vincent until the 17th. As soon as the landing was completed, the Caribs, true to their promises, came to join us.[1] Lieutenant du Rumain immediately seized the heights overlooking the island's capital, the town of Kingstown. Although the garrison consisted of three hundred regular troops, commanded by a lieutenant colonel, the governor, probably yielding to the fears that the intervention of the Caribs inspired among the inhabitants, entered into negotiations for the surrender of the colony. The terms granted by the Marquis de Bouillé to the inhabitants of Dominica served as the basis for the capitulation, which was signed the following day.[2]

When news of our failure off Saint Lucia reached France, Squadron Leader de Ternay was finishing fitting out six vessels with which he was to sail to India. The government decided that these vessels would be sent to the Caribbean Sea. The minister retained Mr. de Ternay in France, to whom he temporarily gave a command in the army of Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers.

1. A resident of Martinique, an officer in the militia, Mr. Laroque-Perein, played a very honorable role in this affair. He landed on the island before the expedition and went to the Caribbean, directing its movements until our arrival.

2. The Rumain's ship's lieutenant was finalizing the terms of the surrender when he was informed that several ships were sighted offshore. He returned to his ship, cut his cable, and set sail to reconnoiter them. The vessels in sight were English merchant ships that gave chase to Mr. Rumain's corvette, but the latter overtook two of them and brought them back to Saint Vincent.[133]

His successor, Squadron Leader de Lamotte-Picquet, set sail for Martinique on May 1st. On June 27th, he entered Fort Royal Bay with the *Hannibal*, the *Diadème*, the *Réfléchi*, the *Artésien*, the *Amphion*, the frigates *Blanche*, *Amazone*, *Fortunée*, and sixty transports. Count d'Estaing embarked troops on his squadron, and he set sail on June 31st with twenty-five vessels. He intended to attack Barbados, but having found winds outside that prevented him from reaching the island by broadside, he headed for Grenada. On July 2nd, the squadron anchored near Beauséjour Point, a short distance from George Town, the island's capital.

On a height overlooking the city, the English had established an entrenched camp, defended by heavy-caliber guns. This position, known as Hospital Hill, was occupied by a detachment of regular troops and militiamen, about 800 strong. The Governor of Grenada, Lord Macarteney, considered it impregnable, and had the colony's most precious objects brought there. As for himself, he was personally stationed in a fort located between Hospital Hill and George Town. Count d'Estaing, anticipating the imminent arrival of Admiral Byron, wished to regain his freedom of action as quickly as possible. He resolved to seize the entrenched camp by a surprise attack, which could be considered the key to the position. As soon as the sun set, the expeditionary force, divided into three columns, commanded by Colonels Arthur and Edward Dillon and de Noailles, set out. In order to divert the enemy's attention, a demonstration was made in the evening at an English post near the sea, in which some ships of the squadron took part. Around eleven o'clock, our soldiers silently climbed the steep slopes leading to the summit of the hill.[134]

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Although the English had piled up obstacles, such as palisades and dry stone walls, nothing could stop the troops' momentum. D'Estaing was one of the first to leap, sword in hand, into the enemy entrenchments. After a very fierce but short-lived fight, the English laid down their arms. At daybreak on the 4th, Count d'Estaing fired a few cannon shots at the fort where the governor was stationed. Lord Macarteney, knowing that further resistance was futile, sent an officer to negotiate a surrender. The proposals he made to Count d'Estaing having been rejected, he surrendered at his discretion. One hundred and two cannons, sixteen mortars, three flags, food, ammunition, and thirty merchant ships fell into our hands. On July 5, the troops not intended to occupy the town and the forts were re-embarked.

Admiral Byron had been informed at Saint-Christophe, where he had returned on July 1st, of the loss of Saint-Vincent. Extremely concerned about the effect that the news of this event would produce in England, he had resolved to take this conquest from us immediately. He was en route to Saint-Vincent with twenty-one ships and twenty-eight transports carrying landing troops, when he learned, from a ship sent in search of him, that Grenada was under attack. He headed for this island, covering himself with sails, in order to defend it, if there was still time. Count d'Estaing, informed, during the night of July 5th, of Admiral Byron's approach, gave the order to sail at four o'clock in the morning. At daybreak, the English fleet was sighted from the heights of the island, which our frigates signaled by firing cannons. She was running, tack to port, with east-northeast winds, hugging the west coast of the island. The French were maneuvering to form a line by speed rank, tack to starboard. Several vessels, which had spent the night under sail to protect us against any surprise, were under wind.[135]

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At the sight of our squadron, which seemed in disorder, Admiral Byron gave the signal to drive forward and close fire on the enemy. Around 7:30, the best of his army arrived within cannon range of our advance guard. The latter met them with such well-directed fire that several ships, notably the *Prince of Wales*, the *Boynes*, and the *Sultan*, were badly damaged. Other ships soon joined the ships that were engaged, and the fighting continued with great vigor. The *Montmouth*, the *Grafton*, the *Cornwall*, and the *Lion*, strictly complying with their admiral's orders, fought us at close quarters. Ten French ships, which were to leeward, took no part in this affair. When the two lines had passed each other, Admiral Byron continued his course along the land. Unaware that Kingstown was in our power, he saw no obstacle in front of him that could prevent him from reaching St. George's Bay. The confidence he had in the success of his enterprise was not of long duration. Shortly after, he arrived within cannon range of the town, and the forts, after hoisting the white flag, opened fire on his ships. The English admiral signaled his army to tack downwind, all at once, and to the convoy to force sail. The two squadrons then formed two parallel lines, and the combat recommenced with renewed vivacity. The Count d'Estaing having let bear to rally a certain number of ships that had not yet managed to take up their positions, the English held the wind and the action ceased around noon. Four ships, the *Montmouth*, the *Cornwall*, the *Grafton* and the *Lion*, which had considerable damage to their masts, were to leeward and astern of their squadron. At three o'clock in the afternoon, the French fleet, well rallied, tacked to the wind, all at once.

1. Vice-Admiral Barrington, whose flag was on the *Prince of Wales*, was among the wounded.[136]

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Admiral Byron signaled the same maneuver to his ships, but three of them, the *Cornwall*, the *Grafton*, and the *Lion*, were unable to execute it. The *Cornwall* and the *Grafton*, unwilling to tack to the wind, which would have brought them closer to the French, continued to run on starboard tack. The captain of the *Lion*, despairing of rejoining his men, let the wind bear away, and headed west. This ship would have been inevitably captured if one of ours had been detached in pursuit. The retreat of the English made the conquest of Grenada definitive. Count d'Estaing, fearing to compromise this success, wanted neither to divide his forces nor to move away. By his order, the French squadron took the closest approach, tacks to port, forming up on the rear-runner, that is to say, on the ship with the strongest wind in the fleet. The *Cornwall* and the *Grafton*, which the English did not think of defending, and which would have been taken, if Count d'Estaing had had the will, passed on the opposite side and to windward of our line. These two vessels, already very badly treated, received broadsides from several French vessels. During the night, our squadron made a few tacks without leaving land, and the next day it retook the anchorage of Saint-George. A transport, on which were one hundred and fifty soldiers, fell into our hands. This was the only trophy of that day, in which we could have taken the *Lion*, the *Cornwall*, the *Grafton* and the *Montmouth*. The latter vessel was in such disrepair that the English admiral sent it to Antigua on the evening of July 6. This admiral, in reporting to his government the various incidents of the battle of Grenada, expressed his surprise that the French had not sent any ships in pursuit of the *Lion*. He further declared that it would have been easy to cut off the *Cornwall* and the *Grafton*, and especially the *Cornwall*, which was a very great distance to leeward of the English line. In a private letter, Suffren said: "The general conducted himself by land and sea with great valor.[137]

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Victory cannot be disputed, but if he had been as brave a sailor as he was, we would not have let four dismasted ships escape."[1] Suffren was not inclined to indulgence, but, on the other hand, he had the best relations with the Count d'Estaing, who showed him particular esteem. We must therefore believe that the assessment contained in this letter very accurately expressed the opinion of this great sailor on the battle of Grenada. We recall that, on July 6, the engagement between the two squadrons began at seven thirty in the morning. The firing had ceased for the first time, when the two lines had passed each other. At that moment, the English were running broad-hauled, port tack, towards the anchorage of Saint-George, while the French were making close-hauled, starboard tack. It was said after the battle that if, at that moment, we had veered to the wind ahead by counter-marching, we would likely have cut off the English army and gained a great advantage over them. Count d'Estaing felt he should apologize to the minister for not having executed this movement. He did so in the following terms:

1. We find in this letter, written on July 10, that is to say, four days after the Battle of Grenada, the following passage, which should be read with the interest that attaches to everything that comes from Suffren: "The two squadrons were heading towards each other. I was at the head and I received the first fire from the English squadron, composed of twenty-one ships. This lasted nearly an hour and a half. The English squadron retraced its course, so that the two lines found themselves almost parallel. I then had nearly an hour and a half's interval, after which the fight recommenced and lasted nearly two and a half hours. My ship was badly mistreated, but not in proportion to the fire I received. I am heartbroken at the loss of my second, the Chevalier de Camprédon, who played the piano forte so well. I had twenty-two men killed and forty-three wounded, twenty of them seriously. D'Albert and my nephews are well. The Sagittaire behaved very well. I say nothing to you about the *Fantasque*, but having attacked at a post of honor which was not intended for it, and, for an hour and a half, endured the fire of twenty-one ships, disinterested people will speak well of it, and its enemies, if it has any, will not dare to speak ill of it. The English had a convoy of troops at sea, in the hope that the squadron would be defeated, the army captured and Grenada saved. The English squadron is very badly treated; if it does not receive very considerable reinforcements, it will not show itself again.[138]

"You will be told that if I had made the counter-march turn to windward when the English fleet had overtaken the King's, the English fleet would have been cut off. I think the opposite. If I had done so, our untidy line would have been cut off, many of our ships being too far to leeward. A major movement, a slow and dangerous evolution, requires at least that one be in order before attempting them. I would have risked everything and gained nothing. But what resolves the point of difficulty is that M. de Lamotte-Picquet and several other vessels full of ardor and zeal were only able to turn two hours after I gave the signal, not to cut off, but simply to resume the line, so badly were they rigged." Since Count d'Estaing asserted that our line was in disorder, the evolution mentioned above would have been inappropriate. Whatever the case may be regarding this incident, it can be said, without error, that the judgment on the Grenada affair was rendered by Suffren in the letter we quoted above. As for Admiral Byron, he had shown, on July 6, more boldness than skill. Upon arriving in sight of the French squadron, he had completely mistaken its position. Believing that our ships were dispersed, while they were maneuvering to form, he had fought us without obeying any orders. The considerable damage suffered by several English ships had been the consequence of this mode of attack. The English, having fought to windward, had lost fewer men than the French, but their ships were more severely damaged than ours. They had 529 men out of action, among whom 183 were killed and 346 wounded.[1] On our side, the number of killed was 190 and the number of wounded 759.[2]

1. These are the figures given by the English admiral.

2. Messrs. de Champorcin, commanding the ship *Provence*; Ferron du Quengo, commanding the *Amphion*; de Montault, commanding the *Fier-Rodrigue*; de Gotho, the Chevalier de Gotho, de Marguery, Jacquelot, de Camprédon, lieutenants of the ship; Buisson, auxiliary officer; Bernard de la Turmelière, Tuffin de Ducis, marine guards; de Fremond, de Clairant, infantry officers, were among the dead. Among the wounded were Messrs. de Dampierre, de Retz, de Cillart de Suvilie, de Castellet; ship captains; Le Normand de Victor, Massillan de Sanilhac, Desglaiseaux de Vanal and de Carné-Carvallet, lieutenants, Scoslierna, Swedish officer; de Boulouvard de Barentin, de la Martinière, le Rey, Frossard, Jugand, auxiliary officers; of Reyniès, of Biarges, marine guards; Count Edouard Dillon, the Knight of Lameth, of Peyrelongue, Plaquet, Raffin, the Viscount of Mory, infantry officers.[139]

The Count d'Estaing, very satisfied with his squadron and the troops that had conquered Grenada, wrote to the minister: "The victory was not indecisive; generals, officers, sailors, and soldiers conducted themselves in the same way. They are all worthy of the master we serve, of the King's kindness, and of yours."[1] The individual reports of the general officers commanding subordinates and the captains were conceived in the same spirit. We will quote one, that of Lamotte-Picquet: "All my officers, in general of the navy and auxiliaries and guards of the navy, have set an example of the greatest bravery and executed my orders with the greatest precision; they deserve the King's favors. I ask nothing in particular for my crew; all have behaved like heroes. A gratuity proportional to the pay of each of them would seem to me just and necessary." This crew, at the beginning of the battle, was, all in all, composed of four hundred men, thirty-two of whom were killed outright and forty-three seriously wounded."

1. After the Battle of Grenada, Count d'Estaing sent the Minister numerous requests for rewards. These requests concerned officers of all ranks and categories: naval officers, enlisted officers, those belonging to the landing force or composing the garrisons of the ships, administrative officers, and surgeons. Petty officers, pilots, and masters were not forgotten. Finally, the Commander-in-Chief asked the Minister to grant pensions to the widows of those who had been killed in combat.[140]

The ships present at the Battle of Grenada were commanded by Captains de Suffren, de Brach, de Bruyères, de Grasse-Limermont, Turpin de Breuil, Desmichels de Champorcin, de Peynier, de Montault, de Boulainvilliers, de Chabert, d'Albert de Rions, de Bougainville, de Soulanges, de Dampierre, Ferron du Quengo, de Lapoype-Vertrieux, de Castellet aîné, de Retz, and Cillart de Surville. Squadron leaders de Broves, de Breugnon, and de Lamotte-Picquet commanded in a subordinate capacity. Count d'Estaing drew the minister's special attention to Messrs. de Suffren and d'Albert de Rions, whom he considered the best captains in his army, and he earnestly requested that he appoint them as squadron leaders. M. de Sartines, less far-sighted than Count d'Estaing, did not recognize the exceptional valor of these two captains, and he refused to give them this promotion. M. d'Albert de Rions received a letter of congratulations for his fine conduct during the campaign, and Commander de Suffren a pension of fifteen hundred livres.[1] The corvette *Diligente* carried news of the naval battle of July 6 and the conquest of Grenada to France. A naval officer and an army officer, charged with returning to the King the flags captured from the enemy, were on board this vessel. The nation welcomed, with an enthusiasm perhaps greater than the circumstances warranted, the news of the events that had just transpired in the Caribbean Sea. A *Te Deum* was sung in Paris and in all the major cities of France, to thank heaven for the protection it granted to our forces.

1. Commander de Suffren, it was said in the report addressed to the King, ship captain who commanded the ship *Fantasque*, in the squadron of Count d'Estaing, gave, during the long campaign that this squadron made, the greatest proofs of zeal and activity in all the particular missions with which he was charged as well as of bravery and skill in combat. He particularly distinguished himself in that of Grenada, where he was leader of the squadron. He is one of the best ship captains that His Majesty has in his service, and, since he cannot advance him at this moment, he is worthy at least of some distinguished mark of his satisfaction. It is proposed to His Majesty to grant him, as a reward for his very useful services during this campaign, a pension of fifteen hundred pounds.[141]

The French government had forbidden Count d'Estaing from occupying any islands he might seize. He was to take the garrisons prisoner, destroy the fortifications, remove the cannons, weapons, ammunition, and supplies, and withdraw. Abandoning Grenada would have been very detrimental to the recovery of our many wounded. They had been put ashore on July 7 and would have had to be re-embarked when the squadron set sail. Count d'Estaing resolved to take temporary possession of the island. The state of Admiral Byron's ships and the approach of wintering put our new conquest beyond any possible attempt for a few months. If the minister disapproved of the course of action taken by the commander of our squadron, he could send, before the resumption of operations in the Windward Islands, the order to evacuate Grenada. The Cariac and Union Islands were captured by a division commanded by Captain de Suffren. Finally, the Governor of Saint Vincent seized the small Grenadine Islands.

Comte d'Estaing set sail on July 15th for Guadeloupe, where he arrived on the 19th. He set sail again on the 20th with a merchant fleet destined for his return to Europe. On the 22nd, the French squadron paraded in front of the Basse-Terre harbor on the island of Saint Kitts, where Admiral Byron had retreated after the Battle of Grenada. The position of the English ships, hunkered down under the protection of the forts, did not allow us to attack them advantageously. Comte d'Estaing was informed that two enemy vessels, one of which was dismasted, were anchored off the small Dutch island of Saba. He did not think of seizing these two vessels which the island's batteries would have been powerless to defend.[142]

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"The flag of the States-General alone," he wrote to the minister, "was enough to prevent me from attacking them there. I know that His Majesty does not want the imperious conduct of the English to be imitated." The squadron continued its route to Cap Français, where it arrived on July 31. Letters from America informed Count d'Estaing that Georgia had fallen into English power, and that South Carolina was very seriously threatened. The French consul in Charleston and General Lincoln, governor of South Carolina, claimed that the presence of the squadron and a few thousand soldiers would be enough to retake Georgia and force the enemy to evacuate Carolina.[1] M. de Sartines had ordered the return to France of the twelve ships and four frigates that had left Toulon on April 13, 1778. The rest of our forces were to remain in the Antilles, under the command of squadron leaders de Grasse and Lamotte-Picquet. Despite the minister's very precise instructions, Count d'Estaing set sail from Santo Domingo on August 16 with his entire squadron and headed for the coasts of the United States. At the time of his departure, he had no particular operation in mind. He was wondering whether he should relieve the southern provinces or head for the coasts of North America. Perhaps, with haste, he could free Georgia from English occupation, and, after this initial success, join Washington in attacking New York. He reserved the right to make a final decision once he had communicated with the mainland.[2]

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1. Letters addressed to me in Saint-Domingue by the French consul in Charleston, the American governor of Carolina, and the Marquis de Prétigny, announced great opportunities and requested little assistance to save South Carolina and retake Georgia. I had my doubts, but it was necessary to inform ourselves and, above all, to know what was happening in the northern part of the continent. (Letter from Count d'Estaing to the minister.)

2. First rendezvous point in the event of separation: Charleston in South Carolina, off which we would cruise for eight full days, awaiting the naval force. Second meeting place, the Boston anchorage in front of the Light House, where we will wait for new orders. We may, in the event that the enemy arrives, or that the weather requires it, enter the harbor of Nantasket. If we separate before the army has passed in front of Charleston, the first rendezvous will take place, and then the second. If the separation takes place, after the army has passed in front of Charleston, we will only go to the second rendezvous place. For a true copy of the original, signed d'Estaing, and dated on board the ship Languedoc, in the harbor of Cap, island of Saint-Domingue, August 12, 1779. - Chevalier de Borda. This order, given to the captains of the squadron, shows that Count d'Estaing had no fixed plan when leaving Saint-Domingue.[143]

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II

On August 31, our squadron dropped anchor off the mouth of the Savannah River. M. de Fontanges, an officer of the expeditionary force, was sent to Charleston with the mission of reporting to the general very precise information on the state of affairs. He was ordered to be very cautious regarding the assistance we were able to provide to our allies. Finally, he was to declare that Count d'Estaing would not agree to remain on the coast for more than eight days. On September 2, the squadron encountered an extremely violent gale while anchored. Five vessels, including the *Languedoc*, broke their rudders. Count d'Estaing found himself unable to put to sea again until this significant damage had been repaired. Unable to go to New York, he decided to operate in the southern provinces. He believed that it would be easy to take the city of Savannah, the capital of Georgia, from the English, and he promised his assistance in this operation. The senior commander of the British troops, General Prevost, was in Savannah with a small number of men. Knowing that he had nothing to fear from the Americans, he had divided his small army into several detachments. One of these, the largest, under the command of Colonel Maitland, occupied Port Royal Island, on the coast of South Carolina.[144]

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If we had any chance of defeating the English, it was on the condition that we attacked them before their columns were assembled. Unfortunately, our allies, who had not been warned of the arrival of a French squadron, were not ready to enter the campaign. Ignoring this situation, Count d'Estaing set about executing the agreed plan. Ships from his squadron occupied the various passes that led from the open sea into the Savannah. The frigates and corvettes sailed upriver as deep as their draft allowed. The following passage from a letter addressed to Count d'Estaing by Colonel Laurens shows the enthusiastic welcome we received, the situation of the American troops, and, by our allies' admission, the squadron's perilous position on the Georgia coast: "My General, your presence at this moment is like that of a tutelary deity. You will crush the common enemy and spread joy and gratitude in all hearts. My only personal happiness is to pay you my homage in person. The orders you sent me through Viscount de Fontanges have not deprived me of the opportunity to do so as soon as my heart desired. But I hope that my happiness will be delayed only a few days. In the meantime, my general, I will neglect nothing in my power to hasten the march of the troops as well as to increase their numbers. The common good of France and America and the desire to contribute to your glory are motives too powerful to leave any doubts on this subject. I am not unaware of how critical your situation is, what storms can do to a coast that offers no refuge to large vessels, and finally how much promptness and accuracy we must put into our operations. Our soldiers landed on September 13, a few leagues from the city of Savannah. The time that had elapsed since our arrival on the coast had been taken advantage of by the enemy.[145]

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When General Prevost was informed of the presence of our squadron, he sent orders to his troops to join him. The ships anchored in the various branches of the river had approached the city. Some of them had been sunk to defend the approaches, and their crews had come to increase the strength of the garrison. Blacks, requisitioned in large numbers, had worked night and day on the fortifications. On September 15, Count d'Estaing appeared before Savannah with the French corps and a small detachment of American cavalry. On the 16th, he summoned General Prevost to surrender the city, threatening that if he did not accept the advantageous terms he offered, he would immediately launch an assault. The English general, who had not heard from Colonel Maitland, had an interest in gaining time. After some negotiations, he succeeded in obtaining a twenty-four-hour armistice during which he was to examine, in concert with his officers, our proposals. Colonel Maitland's troops having entered the place the following night, the general declared that he was determined to defend himself to the last extremity. A main force attack having become impossible, following the arrival of the colonel, the allies laid siege to Savannah. In the first days of October, our operations had made no progress; on the other hand, the necessity of removing the squadron from the coast became, each day, more urgent. Several gales had succeeded one another, during which our ships had been compromised. In the councils of the small Franco-American army, it was resolved to take the chances of an assault. The success of this attempt was all the more uncertain since the fortifications of the city had not suffered. Moreover, the enemy had a large garrison and powerful artillery, very well served by the English sailors. On October 9, a little before daybreak, the allies began to move. Despite prodigies of bravery and the example of the generals who marched at the head of the troops, our soldiers, decimated by the fire from the place, were forced to retreat.[146]

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Count d'Estaing, who had behaved with his usual intrepidity, had been wounded. The Allies lifted the siege of Savannah on October 18. A few days later, the Americans were safely on the left bank of the river, and our troops had rejoined their ships. During this short campaign, we had lost sixteen officers, one hundred and sixty-eight non-commissioned officers, sailors, and soldiers, and forty-seven officers and four hundred and eleven non-commissioned officers, sailors, and soldiers wounded.

Despite the setback we had just suffered, the presence of the French squadron on the coast had not been without utility for the cause of the United States. The English, unaware of the point where we intended to advance, had remained on the defensive everywhere. General Clinton, fearing that New York would be attacked by land and sea, had concentrated all his forces in this city. By his order, the island of Rhode had been evacuated, and such had been the hasty retreat that the Americans had found food, ammunition, and artillery pieces in the area that had been neglected to be spiked. The *Sagittaire*, commanded by M. d'Albert de Rions, had seized the fifty-gun *Experiment*, on which we found the sum of 650,000 francs. The twenty-six-gun frigate *Ariel* had been captured by the *Amazone*. A frigate and several lower-ranking vessels had been sunk by the English in the Savannah. Finally, several transports, laden with food, ammunition, and supplies of all kinds, had fallen into our hands.

When Count d'Estaing returned aboard the *Languedoc*, all the ships of the squadron were ready to sail. Before returning to France the ships with which he had left Toulon on April 13, 1778, he had to take some measures which he dealt with immediately. Four frigates, the *Fortunée*, the *Blanche*, the *Cérès*, the *Boudeuse*, and the corvette the *Ellis*, were designated to carry men, food and money to Grenada and Saint-Vincent.[147]

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The soldiers belonging to the garrison of Saint-Domingue were embarked on Lamotte-Picquet's ships. As for the troops from the Windward Islands, they boarded the squadron of the Count of Grasse. This general officer was to stock up on supplies in Chesapeake Bay before heading for Martinique. He set sail on October 26th with the *Robuste*, the *Fendant*, the *Diadème*, and the *Sphinx*, and waited, under sail, for the *Vengeur*, the *Dauphin-Royal*, and the *Artésien* to be ready to follow. Such was the fleet's situation when, on the 28th, bad weather interrupted all communication between the vessels. The *Languedoc* had two anchors at sea, the only ones it had not lost in the previous gales. The cable of one of them having broken, the ship dragged, after having made head on the second anchor. The order was given to cut the cable, and the flagship set sail. Most of the vessels had no other anchors than those on which they were anchored. This consideration, together with the assurance given by the pilot that the bad weather would not last long, determined the commander-in-chief to signal not to imitate his maneuver. The same day, two other vessels, the *Provence* and the *Tonnant*, were forced to sail. On November 5, the *Languedoc* was one hundred and eighty leagues offshore. Convinced that our vessels had left the coast of America, Count d'Estaing headed for Brest where he arrived in the first days of December. After the departure of Count d'Estaing, command of the vessels anchored at the mouth of the Savannah belonged to Squadron Leader de Broves. All the arrangements made by Count d'Estaing for the distribution of troops among the various ships of the squadron were carried out. The ships designated to return to the Caribbean Sea set sail for their destination. M. de Broves set sail on November 1st for Brest with the *César*, on which he had his flag, the *Hector*, the *Guerrier*, the *Protecteur*, the *Vaillant*, the *Zélé*, the *Marseillais*, the *Sagittaire*, the *Fantasque* and the *Experiment*.[148]

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The *Zélé* and the *Marseillais* separated from the squadron during the night of November 1st to 2nd. These two vessels, having encountered heavy weather and contrary winds, headed for Cadiz. After a few days' stay in that port, the captains of these two vessels went to Toulon, instead of going to Brest, as they had received orders.[1] With the exception of the *Tonnant*[2], which was forced to put into the Antilles to repair its damage, the vessels, which had set sail from the mouth of the Savannah to return to Europe, arrived in our ports in December.

Count d'Estaing had just completed a campaign that had not entirely met the expectations of the French government. The slowness of his crossing, leaving Toulon, had not allowed him to surprise Admiral Howe at the mouth of the Delaware. During his stay on the coasts of North America, he had been from the entrance to New York to Rhode Island, and from Rhode Island to Boston, without once finding the opportunity to use the squadron he commanded. Upon his arrival in the Antilles, he had suffered, while attempting to rescue the island of Saint Lucia, a very serious setback. In the battle of July 6, the French squadron had won an indisputable advantage over the enemy. However, the results of that day were not superior to those we had obtained at Ushant. Now, at Ushant, the number of vessels was the same on both sides, but the total number of guns was less considerable on our squadron than on the English vessels.

1. The minister was very dissatisfied with the conduct of the commanders of the *Zélé* and the *Marseillais*. Both were banned from command, the senior captain of the *Marseillais* for an indefinite period, the second for four months.

2. The *Tonnant* left Santo Domingo in January 1780, escorting a merchant convoy, with which it arrived in the Basque harbor on March 15.[149]

In Grenada, on the contrary, we had the numerical superiority, since we had twenty-five ships against twenty-one. Upon his arrival in Martinique, Count d'Estaing had taken command of the French troops stationed in the Windward Islands, on the orders of the minister. In this capacity, he had directed the military operations during the campaign. While the capture of Morne de l'Hôpital in Grenada was a very brilliant action, the attack on the English positions in Saint Lucia had had the most serious consequences. In Savannah, where we had launched ourselves forward with more boldness than reflection, we had been no more successful than in Saint Lucia. Although Count d'Estaing had attached his name to a very honorable day for our forces, it was fair to say that he had distinguished himself neither as a squadron leader nor as a general. What was beyond dispute was the rare intrepidity he had shown in all circumstances. But personal courage, when not supported by special knowledge, is of little use to the leaders of fleets and armies. Thus, the Count d'Estaing, who greatly desired to retake Saint Lucia, had not dared to lead his squadron into the cove where Admiral Barrington's ships were anchored. Lacking the sure enough eye to realize the possibility of success, he had shrunk from the responsibility that failure would have imposed on him. It would be a mistake to believe that the government's instructions obliged him to be circumspect. Far from holding him back, the minister urged him forward. We have proof of this in the following passage from a letter from the Count d'Estaing to M. de Sartines: "The letters, Monseigneur, with which you have honored me, attest to His Majesty's will. His intentions and yours are that the glory of the King's arms be supported with as much audacity as firmness." Had the Count d'Estaing found among the general officers and captains of his squadron the support on which he had the right to count?[150]

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His reports and the numerous requests for rewards that he addressed to the minister, either after the battle of Grenada or following his campaign on the coasts of North America, leave no room for doubt on this point.[1] In Savannah, the navy had only had to endure bad weather. However, it was the navy that had provided the expeditionary force with food, munitions, and supplies. This service, which circumstances sometimes made difficult, had been led by squadron leaders de Broves and de Lamotte-Picquet with as much zeal as goodwill. This was also highly recognized by Count d'Estaing, who wrote to the minister: "Mr. Count de Broves, assisted by the care and work, as immense as it was useful, of Mr. Chevalier de Borda, major of the squadron, sent me, during the course of the siege, all the relief that depended on him.

1. Among the ship captains that the Count d'Estaing proposed upon his arrival in France for the rank of squadron leader was M. de Boulainvilliers, his flag captain. This officer, who had rendered services during the campaign, was in very poor health. The Count d'Estaing asked the minister to appoint him squadron leader and to retire him eight days after his promotion. In his early days in the navy, M. de Boulainvilliers had witnessed a sea incident that we will relate. It is a page of maritime history that must not be forgotten. His father commanded, in 1741, the ship Bourbon, part of the squadron of the Duke of Antin. This squadron, which consisted of nineteen ships, was returning to Europe from the Antilles. Arriving at the Azores, it was divided into two parts: one headed for Toulon, and the other for Brest. On April 2, following a squall, the *Bourbon* found itself separated from its squadron. This vessel had a leak that quickly took on worrying proportions. The captain steered towards the coast of Portugal, from which it was not far. The vessel, weighed down by the water, moved very slowly. On April 12, the *Bourbon* being in sight of land, three boats were sent towards the coast. The officer in command was charged with finding a favorable point to beach the vessel. He also had orders to send to the *Bourbon* all the fishing boats or others that he saw. The boats were a short distance from the vessel when it disappeared. The three boats carrying thirty-four men, including officers, arrived at Corunna. In a report of this event, dated from La Coruña, and which is from the son of the captain of the *Bourbon*, the same one who commanded the *Languedoc* in 1778, we read: "Our six hundred men, both officers and marine guards, have not left the work since the morning of the 10th, and they have served without respite the seven pumps and the two hundred buckets. On the evening of the 11th, we had fifteen to eighteen feet of water in the ship. During the night of the 11th to the 12th, land was sighted. There was no weakness in the crew, not a cry, not a murmur, no confusion, each to his task." Another report which must be from the French consul says: "Captain de Boulainvilliers fulfilled the order from point to point, having suffered the fate of the ship that the King had entrusted to him, leaving a worthy memory of constancy, valor and greatness of soul which deserves all possible praise. Having no doubt of the extreme and inevitable danger, he ordered his son to embark in the small boat, which they could not force him to do. The first lieutenant, M. de Cany and the other officers put him by force in the small boat, which saved this worthy remnant of this illustrious family. The Boulainvilliers family was also a military family. The eldest brother of the captain of the *Bourbon* had been killed on the ship *Maur*; finally a third had died in Brest, being lieutenant of the guards of the flag. Captain de Boulainvilliers of the *Languedoc* was made squadron leader on May 5, 1780, and he received, on the 13th, permission to retire from service.[151]

Mr. de Lamotte-Picquet, for his part, did the same thing with the greatest zeal, often becoming impatient with the winds and setbacks that any other would have had difficulty overcoming." Reporting to the minister the capture of the *Experiment* by the *Sagittaire*, commanded by Captain d'Albert de Rions, Count d'Estaing said: "The King has no bolder ship captain, no more eager to do good, nor a better boatswain than Mr. d'Albert de Rions."

During the war of 1756, Count d'Estaing had fought very honorably in India. After serving as a colonel and brigadier in Lally Tollendal's army, he had taken part in several maritime expeditions that had caused great harm to English trade. His bravery, his spirit of enterprise, his patriotism, had drawn attention to his person. Instead of giving him the promotion to which he was entitled in the army, the government had appointed him lieutenant-general of the naval forces. By entering the navy with such a high rank, d'Estaing had condemned himself to remain below the position he had sought.

1. During the war of 1756, the navy, long neglected by the government and greatly inferior in numbers to the English navy, had been defeated. Public opinion had seen only our defeats, and it had seemed, at the time, that by taking officers from outside the navy, there was a greater chance that they would be worth something. The government, probably obeying this current of opinion, had made this appointment. There are circumstances when governments, like crowds, lose their sense of the right things.[152]

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To explain his failures, it has been claimed, following an eminently French custom, that he did not receive the strict obedience due from his captains. We have demonstrated, based on irrefutable evidence, the inaccuracy of this assertion. These are historical errors that are transmitted, if one may put it that way, from book to book. What can be said with truth is that most officers did not believe in the maritime ability of Count d'Estaing. In a corps that included general officers like d'Orvilliers, de Guichen, Lamotte-Picquet, and a few others, this fact is not surprising. The most absolute obedience is de rigueur in military corps. As for trust, it is not imposed, and generals must earn it through their conduct, their actions, and above all, through their superiority.

III

The divisions of Count de Grasse and Lamotte-Picquet were dispersed by bad weather, and the ships that comprised them sailed separately to their destination. Three frigates, the *Blanche*, the *Alcmène*, and the *Fortunée*, fell into enemy hands. The *Annibal*, the *Magnifique*, the *Diadème*, the *Dauphin*, the *Vengeur*, the *Artésien*, and the *Réfléchi* arrived in Martinique in the first days of December. All these vessels had to repair significant damage, sustained during the return crossing from the American coast to the Antilles, or while anchored off the Savannah. Four vessels, the *Magnifique*, the *Dauphin Royal*, the *Diadème*, and the *Artésien* were temporarily laid up.[153]

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On December 18, 1779, a convoy of twenty-six merchant ships, which had left Marseille during the month of October, led by the frigate *Aurore*, appeared off the coast of Pointe des Salines. Admiral Hyde Parker, who had replaced Admiral Byron as commander-in-chief of England's naval forces in the Caribbean Sea, was at Gros Islet in Saint Lucia. Upon seeing the French frigate and the ships it was escorting, he set sail with fourteen vessels. The captain of the *Aurore*, after signaling to keep to windward and reef, bravely placed himself behind his convoy. It appeared that our ships were to be overtaken by the English before reaching Fort Royal Bay. The *Annibal*, the *Vengeur*, and the *Réfléchi* had no sails in their yards, and their gunpowder and cannonballs had been unloaded. Finally, the majority of the men forming the crew of these three vessels were on land, either sick or convalescent. Whatever the difficulties of this situation, Lamotte-Picquet did not want to watch as a mere spectator the capture of our ships. The signal to make for the enemy rose to the masts of the *Annibal*. Preparations for departure were made with an activity and ardor that was heightened by the sight of Admiral Parker's squadron. Sailors from the ships in the harbor completed the crews of our ships. When the *Annibal*, which was the first under sail, arrived within cannon range of the English, the *Aurore* defended herself with the greatest energy. Shortly after, the *Vengeur* and the *Réfléchi* appeared on the battlefield. The French withdrew under small sails, covering the merchant ships that had not been captured, at the moment when Lamotte-Picquet intervened. Night brought an end to this unequal battle during which three French ships had fought the greater part of Admiral Parker's squadron.[154]

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Of the twenty-six vessels comprising the convoy, ten fell into English hands, twelve entered Fort Royal safely, and four were thrown ashore. The latter were lost, but their cargo was saved. The population had witnessed all the twists and turns of this brilliant affair from the shore. Lamotte-Picquet's boldness, his skill, and his bravery aroused the greatest enthusiasm in the colony. The English officers admired the maneuvering of our vessels no less than the warlike Creoles of Martinique. Admiral Hyde Parker wrote to Lamotte-Picquet: "Sir, I have received the letter that Your Excellency did me the honor of writing to me via the Little Saint-Michel. Although it is only a short time since you took a frigate and several other vessels from me, I cannot help but esteem and admire you." Your Excellency's conduct in the affair of the 18th of this month fully justifies the reputation you enjoy among us, and I assure you that I could not, without envy, witness the skill you displayed on this occasion. Our enmities are temporary and depend on our masters, but your merit has engraved in my heart the greatest admiration for you. I will always take the greatest care to ensure that your parliamentarians and your prisoners are well treated, and I will gladly seize every opportunity that may arise to give you proof of the consideration and esteem with which I am held by Your Excellency. This letter does the greatest honor to the high character of the English admiral, at the same time as it shows the feelings of perfect courtesy with which the officers of the two nations were animated towards each other.

During the year 1779, the Spanish seized the establishments that Great Britain possessed in the Mississippi. The English took the fort of Omoa in the Bay of Honduras.[155]

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BOOK V

Spain declares war on England. - Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers leaves Brest to junction with Don Luis de Cordova. - Health status of our fleet's crews. - Late reunion of the two squadrons. - Preparations made on the coasts of Brittany and Normandy for a landing in England. - The combined fleet, arriving at the opening of the English Channel, is driven back out to sea by an easterly gale. - The allies pursue Admiral Hardy, unsuccessfully. - Development of the disease raging aboard French vessels. - The Franco-Spanish fleet returns to Brest. - Situation of the French squadron. - Responsibility of the Minister of the Navy.

I

Charles III, after much hesitation, decided to take part in the war. On April 12, 1779, MM. Count de Montmorin and Count de Florida-Blanca[1], plenipotentiaries of France and Spain, signed a treaty of offensive and defensive alliance at Aranjuez. In exchange for minor advantages that she guaranteed us, at the time peace was concluded, Spain proposed to obtain the restitution of Gibraltar, Minorca, and Pensacola, and possession of the river and fort of Mobile. We undertook not to lay down our arms until our allies were masters of the Rock of Gibraltar.[2]

1. Count de Montmorin was the French ambassador to the court of Spain. Count de Florida-Blanca held the Department of Foreign Affairs, at the same time as he was the principal minister of His Catholic Majesty.

2. We give below the most important articles of the convention of April 12:[156]

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The courts of Madrid and Versailles had agreed to make a landing in England. A fleet, composed of the squadrons that both nations had in the seas of Europe, was to cover the passage of a French army departing from the Channel ports. The English, confident in Spain's peaceful dispositions, had retained on their coasts only the forces necessary to hold the Brest squadron in check.[157]

"Art. 5. For the future case of peace and the definitive treaty that the war must bring about, His Most Christian Majesty intends to procure or acquire the following advantages or utilities: 1. The revocation of the abolition of all articles that deprive His Most Christian Majesty of the freedom, which belongs to him by right, to carry out at Dunkirk such works at sea or on land as he may deem necessary; 2. The expulsion of the English from the island and from the Newfoundland fishery; 3. The absolute and indefinite freedom of the East Indies trade, and the freedom to acquire and fortify such trading posts as His Most Christian Majesty may deem suitable; 4. The recovery of Senegal and the most complete freedom of African trade outside English trading posts; 5. The irrevocable possession of the island of Dominica, and 6. The abolition or full execution of the commercial treaty concluded at Utrecht, in 1713, between France and England.

Art. 7. The Catholic King intends to obtain, for his part, by means of the war and the future peace treaty, the following advantages: 1. The restitution of Gibraltar; 2. Possession of the river and fort of Mobile; 3. The restitution of Pensacola, with the entire coast of Florida extending along the Bahama Channel, so that no foreign power may have an establishment on this channel; 4. The expulsion of the English from the Bay of Honduras, and the execution of the prohibition, stipulated by the last Treaty of Paris of the year 1763, not to form any establishment in this bay, nor in the other Spanish territories; 5. The revocation of the privilege granted to the same English, to cut dyewood on the coast of Campeche, and 6. The restitution of the island of Minorca.

Art. 9. - Their Most Christian and Catholic Majesties promise to make every effort to procure and acquire all the advantages specified above, and to continue these efforts until they have obtained the goal they have set for themselves, offering each other not to lay down arms and not to make any treaty of peace, truce or suspension of hostilities, without having at least obtained and secured respectively the restitution of Gibraltar and the abolition of the treaties relating to the fortifications of Dunkirk, or, failing this article, any other object, at the will of His Most Christian Majesty." M. de Vergennes, wishing to obtain the alliance of Spain, was obliged to accept the conditions contained in article 7, but this clause weighed heavily, throughout the duration of the war, on the conduct of military operations. Finally, it created serious difficulties for the French government, when the time came to conclude peace.

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Forty ships, commanded by Admiral Hardy, protected Great Britain against any threat of invasion. At the end of May, concern was growing in Madrid and Paris about the merger of the naval forces of the two Crowns. The French government, fearing that the court in London, informed of Spain's plans, would have Admiral Hardy cross the Channel off Brest, sent orders to Count d'Orvilliers to put to sea. The squadron, under the command of this flag officer, was unable to set sail. The port administration could not provide the four thousand men that would have been necessary to complete its crews.[1] M. de Sartines was aware of the convention of April 12 and the plan of encampment that had been agreed upon at that time. Nevertheless, either through negligence or temporary impossibility, he had taken no measures to address this difficulty.

Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers, strongly urged by the minister, disarmed several ships in order to procure some sailors, and embarked two thousand soldiers. The squadron, twenty-eight ships strong, left Brest on June 4th. It arrived on the 11th off the small island of Cizarga, where, according to the minister's instructions, it was to junction with the Spanish.

At the end of June, eight ships from Corunna joined our army. In the first days of July, several French vessels, notably the *Ville-de-Paris*, the *Bien-Aimé*, the *Auguste*, the *Caton*, the *Saint-Esprit*, and the *Couronne*, reported a large number of sick people.

The commander-in-chief sent these ships one after the other to Corunna to give the crews a rest.

1. It was not four thousand men, including novices, sailors, gunners, soldiers, etc., who were lacking to complete the complement of Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers' ships, but four thousand seamen. These four thousand sailors were all the more necessary since the proportion of men not at sea in the composition of the crews had increased since the beginning of the war.[158]

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This situation was not serious, but it worried the Count of Orvilliers. "We are in a good position," he wrote to the minister, "to attack the enemy and begin operations; but the time is all the more precious as the season advances, and there is a fear that the disease will spread to our ships, where we have putrid fevers or smallpox. Moreover, we need as much time as we can to lose only four or five days, after Monsieur Gaston's arrival, necessary to set up the posts, position the ships, and draw them up in battle formation at least twice. I am convinced of the valor and goodwill of our allies; but what I see of their maneuvering confirms to me more than ever that they are very far from being good naval officers." Towards the middle of July, the disease spread very rapidly. Although five hundred men had been put ashore at Corunna and Ferrol, there remained about two thousand sick people.[1] The port of Brest had not been able to provide all the ships with the prescribed quantities of medicine. Finally, several vessels had put to sea without doctors. The Count of Orvilliers made his position known to the minister, and he asked him to send him help as he passed Quessant. The squadron leader of Ternay, in port at Corunna, directly informed M. de Sartines that the *Saint-Esprit*, on which his flag was flying, had one hundred and thirty sick people. This ship had, when it left Brest, sixty men less than its complement, and, since that time, it had lost nine men. The *Bien-Aimé*, which was at Corunna with the *Saint-Esprit*, had eighty-seven men in the hospital, and about twenty sick people on board. This situation was that of most of the ships in the squadron. Time marched on, and Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers received no dispatch from Paris. Surprised by this silence, he wrote to the minister on July 20:

1. The word "sick" refers to men suffering from illness, and not to those who, through slight indisposition, were exempt from service.[159]

"I flatter myself, Monseigneur, that it is the uncertainty of the location of the King's squadron that has deprived me of your news and your orders for the six weeks that I have been here.... I have the honor to inform you, Monseigneur, that if we continue to be afflicted with sick people to the point of hampering the ships for combat, I will authorize the captains, when leaving this area for the Channel, to bundle part of their third plan, to obtain sufficient space in their hold to deposit their sick. I know that the ordinance forbids it, but I have not thought of any other way to put ourselves in a fighting condition. The false deck must be free to receive the wounded." On the 23rd, Lieutenant General Don Luis de Cordova appeared with twenty-eight ships. Although this general officer was senior in rank to Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers, it had been agreed between the courts of Madrid and Versailles that the command in chief would be exercised by the French admiral. Sixteen ships, placed under the command of Don Luis de Cordova, were to form a special squadron, called the observation squadron.

A few days passed during which the two generals proceeded with the organization of the army. An important question, that of signals, had been completely neglected in the private negotiations concerning the union of the two squadrons: "I was very surprised, Monsignor," wrote Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers to the minister, "when I learned that the army's signals had not been printed in Spain, and that Mr. Mazzaredo (major of the Spanish fleet) had been obliged to copy them by hand since his departure from Cadiz. I can assure you that it has never happened that two squadrons, meeting at sea, were reduced to improvising an entire corps of signals. However, this is what I had to do. It is fortunate that I had to deal, for the translation and the orders to be given, with a very intelligent and good-willed major.[160]

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Fortunately, the calm also facilitated communication, so that everything was distributed yesterday, the 28th." On the 28th and 29th, the ships detached at Ferrol and Corunna rallied to the flag of the commander-in-chief. On July 30th, the combined fleet, comprising sixty-six ships of the line, thirty French (two ships, the *Victoire* and the *Bourgogne*, had joined the squadron at sea) and thirty-six Spanish, and fourteen frigates from both nations, headed north. The Franco-Spanish fleet was arranged in the following order:[1]

Ligne de bataille.

Noms des bâtiments.	Nombre de canons.	Noms des capitaines.
	Avant-garde.	
Le Citoyen	74	De Nieuil.
Le Saint-Michel	70	
L'Auguste	80	De Rochechouart, chef d'escadre.
Le Protée	64	De Cacqueray.
Le San-Pablo	70	
L'Éveillé	64	De Balleroy.
Arrogante	70	
Ville-de-Paris	104	Huon de Kermadec. Le comte de Guichen, lieut. général.
Le Glorieux	74	de Beausset, chef d'escadre.
Le Serio	70	
L'Indien	64	De la Grandière.
Le Saint-Pedro	70	
Le Saint-Joseph	70	
Le Palmier	74	De Réale.
La Victoire	74	D'Albert Saint-Hippolyte.
	Corps de bataille.	
Le Zodiaque	74	De Porte Vezins.
Le Guerrier	70	

1. The composition of the combined fleet was taken, as indicated here, from the statements annexed to the reports of Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers.[161]

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Noms des bâtiments.	Nombre de canons.	Noms des capitaines.
Corps de bataille (suite).		
Le Saint-Vincent	80	Le comte d'Arce, lieutenant général.
Le Scipion	74	De Cherisey.
Le Bien-aimé	74	D'Aubenton.
Le Saint-Carlos	80	
La Bretagne	110	Duplessis Parscau. Le comte d'Orvilliers, lieut. général.
Le Neptune	80	Hector, chef d'escadre.
Le Vincendor	70	
Le Destin	74	D'Espinouse.
Le Saint-Joaquin	70	
Saint-Isabel	70	
La Bourgogne	74	De Marin.
Le Solitaire	64	De Monteclerc.
Arrière-garde.		
L'Hercule	74	Le comte d'Amblimont.
Le Septentrion	64	
Le Saint-Esprit	80	Ternay, chef d'escadre.
L'Intrépide	74	Beaussier.
L'Ange Gardien	70	
Le Bizarre	64	De Saint Riveul.
Le Conquérant	74	De Monteil, chef d'escadre.
Le Rayo	80	
Le Saint-Damas	70	
L'Actionnaire	64	De l'Archantel.
L'Alexandre	64	De Trémigon.
Le Brillant	70	
Le Saint-Luis	80	
Le Caton	64	De Seillant.
Le Pluton	74	
Escadre d'observation		
La Trinité	122	
Le Phénix	80	
L'Orient	70	
Le Monarque	70	
Le Vaillant	70	
Le Saint-Julien	70	
Le Saint-Nicolas	80	
Le Rusé	60	
Le Saint-Raphaël	70	

Noms des bâtiments.	Nombre de canons.	Noms des capitaines.
Escadre d'observation (suite).		
La Princesse	70	
La Sainte-Françoise	70	
Le Diligent	70	
Le Saint-Victor	70	
Le Saint-Eugène	70	
Le Saint-François de Paul	70	
La Galice.	70	
Escadre légère.		
Saint-Michel	60	de Labiochaye.
España	64	
Couronne	80	Breil de Rays. / Levassor de Latouche, lieut. général.
Mucho	52	
Triton	64	Chadeau de Laclocheterie.

Following an order to which particular importance was attached in Paris, the vessels that did not belong to the squadron specially commanded by Cordova were mixed with our ships. This arrangement had the advantage of placing this entire part of the Spanish fleet in the same conditions as ours, in the event of an encounter with the enemy. On the other hand, it imposed on our squadron the march of our allies, which was regarded as very poor.

At the time when this formidable armament was making its way towards the entrance to the Channel, nearly two months had passed since our departure from Brest. The squadron had consumed most of its provisions and water[1], and our crews were very weakened.

1. When the squadron set sail, it did not have four full months' worth of provisions and water. Needless to say, the minister was very aware of this situation.[162]

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Despite these unfavorable conditions, Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers, convinced that the minister would send him all the assistance he needed, saw no obstacle to the accomplishment of his mission. He wrote to M. de Sartines on August 2: "I will set sail to reconnoiter Ushant, where I expect to find notices with orders and warnings from you. I will even send a lugger to this island, in the hope that you will have been able to smuggle packages there with orders for the governor to send them to me by any means possible." We will seek the enemy on the coast as far as the harbor of Saint Helena, and then, if I find this harbor free, or if I have taken control of it, I will send to give notice to M. de Vaux at Le Havre, as you recommended, and will inform him of the means that I will employ for the safety of his passage which will depend on the superior forces of the English; that is to say, I will oppose, on that side, the combined army to contain the enemy, and I will send, in the other part, a light squadron and sufficient forces in ships and frigates, or I will propose to M. de Cordova to occupy this part so that the passage of the land army is free and safe. I suppose that then, either by the combat that I will have delivered to the enemies, or by their retreat into their ports, I will be certain of their situation and of the success of the operation." Count d'Orvilliers insisted on the need to send the combined army supplies from the English coast. He also reminded the minister that two-thirds of the French ships would be without water by September 1st.

A cruel misfortune befell the commander of our squadron. His son, a lieutenant on the Ville-de-Paris, succumbed to the illness that was raging among our ships. The unfortunate father endured this event with the firmness befitting his position. "The Lord has taken from me," he wrote to the minister, "everything I had in this world, but he has left me the strength to complete this campaign, and the greatest desire that it be to your satisfaction."[163]

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II

In the first days of August, our government's preparations for a landing in England were completed. The invasion force was divided into two main bodies, one occupying Le Havre and the other Saint-Malo. Four hundred transport vessels were ready to receive them. The expedition's commander-in-chief, Marshal de Vaux, was only waiting for the arrival of the combined fleet at Saint Helena to give his troops the order to embark. England, surprised by Spain's sudden aggression, had only the forty vessels commanded by Admiral Hardy to oppose the sixty-six ships of the Franco-Spanish fleet. If we were masters of the sea, the landing of the French army was assured. Now, at that moment, the best soldiers of England were fighting abroad, and the militias, called up in haste, did not offer the elements of a solid resistance. Internal complications were added to the difficulties of this situation. As a result of the agitation which reigned in people's minds, the court of London was obliged to leave in Ireland a part of the troops at its disposal. The instructions addressed to Marshal de Vaux denoted, on the part of the French government, the intention to act with extreme prudence. The Minister of War said: "In the supposition that Portsmouth would be unassailable, limit ourselves to attacking the Isle of Wight and establishing ourselves there with His Majesty's troops; to fortify themselves there in such a way that they cannot be driven out and that the vicinity of this island and the troops it will contain can sufficiently occupy the enemies on the coasts of the English continent, so that they are obliged to strip the surroundings of Portsmouth.[164]

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When the King's troops have made sufficient fortifications and entrenchments so that the Isle of Wight can be held by ten thousand men against all the enemy's forces, the Count of Vaux is authorized to attempt another landing, under the protection of the naval army, at the point where, in concert with the Count of Orvilliers, they both find it possible to land, as far as Bristol; but, in the event that they cannot be assured of successful success, they will be content, until they have received new orders from His Majesty, to undertake some enterprise in the regions closest to the Isle of Wight, and which they judge most suitable. His Majesty defers, on the choice of all these objects, to the knowledge and local knowledge that the Count of Vaux can procure." On August 7, the Franco-Spanish fleet landed on Ushant with light easterly winds and a calm sea. These circumstances were very favorable for resupplying the squadron, but no orders had been given to Brest, and only insignificant supplies arrived. The supplies from the English coast, which the Count of Orvilliers had requested, were not sent to him. The minister informed him that measures were being taken to meet the needs of his squadron when it entered the Channel. After reconnoitering Cape Lizard on the 14th, the Count of Orvilliers continued his route eastward. He intended, if he could not quickly reach Saint Helena, to anchor in the harbor of Torbay, to embark the equipment, provisions, and personnel sent from Brest. On August 16, he was informed of a change in the government's plans. The landing of the French troops was no longer to take place on the Isle of Wight, but on the Cornish coast, near Falmouth. The Count of Orvilliers was ordered to blockade the English in Plymouth, and to detach two divisions, one to Saint-Malo and the other to Le Havre, to escort the transports on which our soldiers were to embark.[165]

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The government, the minister said in the same dispatch, intended to leave the combined army at sea for a few more months. It is difficult to imagine a more complete change in the plan originally adopted. It must be believed that M. de Sartines had no idea of the scope of his new orders. The port, considered essential to shelter the squadron from bad weather and ensure its supplies, was disappearing. Since the army's landing, according to the new instructions, took place in the vicinity of Falmouth, the combined fleet was obliged not only to hold the sea, but to cruise close to the coast to maintain communication with our troops. Now, as Marshal de Vaux could not be put ashore before the end of August, it resulted in our ships being called upon to perform this service during the months of September, October, and perhaps November. It is needless to add that, at that time, we had no port in the Channel. We will let the Count of Orvilliers himself show what the instructions of the Minister of the Navy were worth: "After the month of September," he wrote to M. de Sartines, "the Channel offers nothing but gales and no shelter. The English, who have all their ports under the west and southwest wind, can, without risking anything, send out their squadrons and fleets. It is not the same for the united forces of France and Spain. If this large number of vessels is battered by a westerly storm, they have no other recourse than to enter the canal and sail east. If the gale is from the south, south-southwest, or even southwest, a large number will not be able to round the southern tip of England,[1] from which it follows that the navies of the two powers are very exposed in this sea during the autumn and winter.

1. It must not be forgotten that this is a squadron cruising within sight of Falmouth.[166]

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The supply of this large army also deserves your consideration, My Lord. Having neither port nor harbor at your disposal, we will be forced to reverse, at sea, transports that I assume arrived without accident, in a season when, very often, communication is impracticable and transport from one ship to another impossible. We will seize the short moments that present themselves, but we cannot flatter ourselves that they will be sufficient for this enormous task. According to the information I have received here from the Normans who are fishing off the coast of England, Falmouth is of no use for the anchorage of a few warships. The water in the harbor is not sufficient, and the harbor, too small to accommodate a squadron, is, moreover, exposed to all the offshore winds. It is, moreover, strewn with rocks which gnaw at cables, cause anchors and sometimes ships to be lost. In general, the English do not anchor there. It is a great misfortune, but a foreseeable misfortune, that the junction of our allies has been so late, and an even greater misfortune the scourge which is disarming our ships. It is also a very distressing contradiction that operations can only begin when the French army is at the end of its water, and soon of its provisions. If we receive the help announced to us from Brest, I will be obliged to lose three or four days of good weather in Torbay Bay to overturn it, fortunate still if everything arrives in full and without accidents. Today is the fourth day that we have been in sight of Cape Lizard and the coast of England which follows it to the east. Nevertheless, I have not encountered any fishing boat where I can find practical pilots. Those announced by Count de Carades have not appeared any more than those stopped at Saint-Malo, or elsewhere, so that we sail as if at random, and without knowledge of the dangers and currents of the coast.[167]

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The Spanish are groaning even more than we are, and they never cease to make their cries heard."

On August 17, our vanguard frigates seized the sixty-four-gun ship *Ardent* off the outskirts of Plymouth. A gale from the east, which blew with great force for several days, drove the fleet out of the Channel. On August 22, the weather having become manageable, Count d'Orvilliers hastened to distribute water and provisions equally among all the vessels. When this operation was completed, the fleet was provisioned until September 20. On August 25, it was learned that the English squadron, thirty-nine ships strong, was in the vicinity of the Isles of Scilly, where it had been driven by the same easterly winds that had prevented us from reaching Torbay. The various events that had occurred since the day the army landed on Ushant placed a very heavy responsibility on Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers. He was well aware that if he gave up on re-engaging in the Channel, he would abort the project of landing in England, on which not only France, but the whole of Europe, had its eyes fixed. On the other hand, the sanitary condition of the crews, far from improving, had been worsening, and the majority of our vessels were no longer seaworthy. On August 25, the principal officers of the fleet were called aboard the *Ville-de-Paris* to deliberate on the situation. All were of the opinion that they should give up on returning to the Channel and attempt an expedition there, either by the means of the two fleets alone, or with the help of the French troops. Since the English squadron was at the Scilly Isles, it was necessary to maneuver to reach it. In the event that we failed to reach it, we were to remain cruising at the entrance to the English Channel until September 8. If, by that date, the ships had not embarked the personnel, equipment and supplies necessary to continue the campaign, the two fleets would separate. The French would return to Brest, while the Spanish would sail for Cadiz.[168]

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Conforming to the opinion unanimously expressed by the fleet's[1] general officers, Count d'Orvilliers set out in search of the English. On August 31, the frigates reported the enemy, who gave chase as soon as they recognized us. On September 2, the English squadron, which we had gained a little, but from which we were still four or five leagues distant, arrived at the entrance to Plymouth. For a moment, it seemed that fortune had some compensation in store for us. The tail vessels reported fifteen large three-masted vessels to leeward of the fleet. The satisfaction of the officers and crews was not long-lasting. The ships in sight were part of a Dutch merchant fleet returning to Europe, escorted by a few frigates. Count d'Orvilliers, having received orders a few days later to return to Brest, anchored in this harbor on September 14. Our allies, who were due to sail directly to a Spanish port, had new instructions to accompany us. The number of sick had reached such proportions that most of the French vessels were unable to maneuver.

We will demonstrate, with figures, the extent of the difficulties with which not only the Count of Orvilliers, but also the captains, officers, and crews of the squadron, had found themselves grappling. At the end of August and in the first days of September, the ships *Bien-Aimé*, *Victoire*, *Actif*, *Intrépide*, *Saint-Michel*, *Caton*, *Ville-de-Paris*, and *Auguste* had been sent back to Brest.

1. The minutes of the court-martial, held aboard the ship *Bretagne* on August 25, 1779, were signed, on the French side, by the following lieutenant-generals and squadron leaders: Guichen, Rochechouart, Latouche-Tréville, the Chevalier de Ternay, Hector, de Monteil, and de Beausset. [169]

The *Ville-de-Paris*[2] had 560 men exempt from service, and the *Auguste*[1] 500. The first of these ships had lost 61 men, and the second 44. Aboard the *Intrépide*, the number of dead rose to 70, and the number of sick to 529. The *Actif* had 400 sick, and the *Caton*, a small ship of 64, 300. The *Victoire*, the *Bien-Aimé*, and the *Saint-Michel* were in no better condition. Among the ships that had remained at sea until the last day, the *Couronne* had nearly 200 sick, and she had left 240 men at the hospital at Corogne. The *Palmier* had 330 sick, the *Bourgogne* 230, the *Destin* 300, and the *Triton*, a ship of 60 guns, 160. The *Alexandre* had only seventy sick men, but three hundred men of its crew, struck down by the epidemic during the campaign, had not yet recovered their strength and could not render any service. The captain of this vessel wrote to the minister at the beginning of October: "I have the honor to inform you that, on the 6th of this month, a review of my crew was held. There were found among the men who had belonged to my former crew, only forty-four petty officers, twelve supernumerary petty officers, seventy-seven sailors, topmen, helmsmen, carpenters and caulkers, twenty-four novices or coastguards and twenty-seven cabin boys."[170]

2. In transmitting the minutes of his ship's surgeon-major, Lieutenant-General de Guichen insisted on the need to return the *Ville-de-Paris* to Brest. For his part, he requested to place his flag on another ship.

1. I have the honor to inform you, Count, that the Auguste is unable to keep to sea for another four days. We have three hundred men on the rigging and at least two hundred who are hardly any better. We cannot make sail because we do not have enough men on watch to reef it. We spent nearly an hour reefing the mainsail last night. It is impossible for me to make all hands on deck, and I will barely have enough men to man my second battery. If you want to keep the Auguste seaworthy, you must provide four hundred men and remove her sick.

I am, with respect,
ROCHECHOUART.

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According to the regulations in force at that time, three-deck ships, such as the *Ville-de-Paris*, with 104 guns, and the *Bretagne*, with 110, had a crew of 1,000 to 1,100 men. The eighty-gun ships had 800 men, the seventy-four seven hundred, and the sixty-four five hundred. Comparing these figures with the number of sick men, one can better understand the degree of weakness and disorganization to which the squadron had reached.

Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers drew the minister's attention to the captains of the frigates and small vessels. All were zealous, active, and capable officers. He pointed out the lack of skill, from the point of view of squadron navigation, of some of his ship captains. But he had nothing but praise for the conduct of the generals, captains, officers, and crews during the cruel trials the squadron had endured. "Never," he wrote in a letter regarding the pursuit of Admiral Hardy, "has the French nation shown more goodwill and bravery than on this occasion. This was manifested to the point that, far from reflecting on the unfortunate and diminished state of the crews, everyone said they no longer felt their pain since the enemy had been driven out." Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers expressed himself on things and people with as much frankness as independence. Everything he wrote must be considered the sincere expression of his thoughts.

III

Upon learning of the return of this fleet, which brought back no other trophy than the ship *Ardent*, captured by our frigates upon landing at Plymouth, France felt a great deal of emotion.[1]

1. The *Ardent*, a small corvette taken in sight of the English squadron, twenty merchant ships and eleven hundred prisoners, such was the result of this campaign.[171]

The nation, convinced that Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers would be master of the sea for a long enough time to ensure the landing in England, had expressed great confidence in the results of this enterprise. It had foreseen a glorious peace as a consequence of our soldiers' successes. The arrival of the combined army in Brest destroyed all these hopes. The slowness of the Spanish, the epidemic that had raged among our ships, the persistence of contrary winds as the fleet was heading north, the easterly gale of August 17—these were the principal causes of the misfortunes of the campaign. But it must be added that the minister had done nothing, attempted nothing to overcome the obstacles the squadron commander had encountered. Our squadron, which had left Brest on June 4, had consumed, in its inaction, part of its water and provisions. Had they been so mistaken in Paris as to believe that the Spanish would rally to us during the month of June? Had the government been in a hurry to see Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers out of Brest, fearing that he would be blocked if he remained in port? This hasty departure, whatever the reason, obliged us to spend the time at sea while our allies were completing their preparations. It was up to the minister to consider the consequences resulting from this state of affairs. The resupply of the squadron, if not complete, at least in conditions that would have allowed us to continue the campaign, was possible off Ushant. If it had been necessary, to carry out this operation promptly and safely, for the fleet to anchor at Bertheaume, Camaret, and even Brest, the minister should not hesitate to order it. Receiving no help, the Count of Orvilliers continued his journey with the thought of reaching Saint Helena as quickly as possible. By seizing this anchorage, he was fulfilling the task assigned to the navy.[172]

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In addition, he conquered the port he needed to shelter his squadron from bad weather and ensure the embarkation of the supplies and equipment expected from Brest. Before this project could be put into execution, the landing plan was modified. The squadron, obliged to cruise off Falmouth during the months of October and November, no longer had any refuge if it encountered a westerly gale. While all the resources of an active and intelligent administration would have been barely sufficient to ward off the evil, the minister seemed to believe that the Count of Orvilliers only needed energy and willpower to fulfill his mission. Instead of sending him relief supplies, without which he could do nothing, he gave him orders that would have been difficult to execute for a well-equipped and perfectly functioning squadron. If we examine the conduct of the commander-in-chief, we seek in vain for the reproaches that one has the right to address to him. After being joined by the Spaniards, he presented himself at the entrance to the Iroise, with the very natural conviction that the minister, taking into account his requests, would send him men, food and equipment. From the day the squadron resumed its march towards the north, Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers remained without influence on events. Circumstances, more than his own will, dictated his resolutions. Poorly received on his arrival, he declared himself ready to resign his command. This offer was accepted with all the greater eagerness, since by sacrificing the squadron commander, M. de Sartines misled public opinion. He made the general bear the blame for the faults that he himself had committed. The Count of Orvilliers took with him into his retreat the regrets of his squadron, and the respect and esteem of the entire navy.

Since the beginning of the war, there had been only two major encounters between the fleets of France and England. In each of them, we had remained masters of the battlefield.[173]

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On July 27, 1778, we had the same number of ships as the English, with the difference that the English ships were stronger than ours. On July 6, 1779, Vice-Admiral Byron commanded twenty-one ships, while Count d'Estaing had twenty-five. Thus, the battle of Ushant was considered superior to that of Grenada. Naval officers remembered that this first success, due to Count d'Orvilliers, had placed our navy on the same footing as the English navy in the opinion of Europe. Captain du Pavillon, one of the best officers in the French navy, was major of the squadron. Consulted by M. de Sartines on the various events that had occurred during the campaign, he wrote him the remarkable letter we enclose here. "My general has just told me that he is disapproved of not having pursued the army longer, and of not having ordered the chase without regard to the order prescribed between the ships drawn up in line of battle. I confess, Monseigneur, that my surprise is extreme. How could he pursue an enemy who was seven leagues to windward, and whose port was open to him and closed to the combined army? How could he avoid running towards a fleet signaled several times by serious people! If it had been English, he would have been condemned much better. Finally, Monseigneur, how could my general neglect for a single instant to leave the Channel, since he was threatened by the southwest winds, since the event proved that he had encountered them, since he was absolutely lacking in water, provisions and even sailors? You must feel today, Monseigneur, since you know the state and progress of the epidemic which is ravaging all the King's ships, that a few days' delay in leaving the Channel would have caused the King to lose his ships and the rest of his sailors.

1. Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers retired to Moulins with a pension. He died in this town on April 14, 1792, at the age of eighty-two.[174]

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This fact is only too well proven; it is equally so in the eyes of the entire fleet that its general has never been so great, so superior to humanity and adversity, as in this campaign, which only failed because the meeting point (Cizarga) of the ships of the two powers was poorly chosen. As for the pursuit of which there is talk in Paris, and which would not have been vigorous enough because an enemy army of thirty-nine ships was not chased without orders, it is easy to respond to this absurd wickedness. 1st The French ships were neither within range nor in a state to fight, since they were real hospitals, rather than warships. 2nd The King's orders were contrary to such dispositions, since the Spanish and the French were intermingled in the battle line, after careful consideration by the court, although it had been proposed, from the outset, to compose the vanguard of the combined army entirely of French vessels. You asked me, Monseigneur, my opinion on all these matters, I give it to you without hesitation and with the same frankness. I have the honor to assure you that the picture of what is happening to M. d'Orvilliers will never leave my memory. I will try to take advantage of it to be wiser and less ambitious, for I do not think that one can show more strength of soul and zeal for the service of the King than this worthy general has shown since the death of his son. I will add to all this, according to yourself, Monseigneur, that M. d'Orvilliers cannot be replaced at this moment, neither for the war, nor for the cabinet. How is it possible that the mere words of a few despicable individuals could harm such a man?" This letter is a badge of honor for the captain of the Pavilion and for the leader who inspired such sentiments.

Due to a blindness that is difficult to understand, the minister did not realize the gravity of the situation.[175]

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He ordered Lieutenant General Duchaffault, temporary successor to the Count of Orvilliers, to replenish his water, provisions, and spare gear, and to be ready to sail. Very surprised to learn, in a letter from the new commander-in-chief, that the health of the crews was rendering our ships powerless, M. de Sartines instructed a council of war to decide whether the squadron could continue the campaign. Marshal de Vaux, Generals de Jaucourt and de Puységur were sent to Brest to attend this council. The commander-in-chief of the army and his lieutenants were to remain outside discussions relating to the purely maritime aspect. Messrs. Duchaffault, de Guichen, de Cordova, Gaston, and d'Arce declared that the squadron was unable to return to sea. The army went into winter quarters, but maintained its organization in order to be ready to march at the first order. We have accurately established the causes of the disaster that resulted from the plan to land in England.

The study of this expedition shows the importance of the role played by the minister responsible for directing military operations. If he lacks the necessary knowledge, intelligence, and organizational skills, the most unfortunate results can be expected. In war, success does not depend solely on those who command the troops. The best armies can be reduced to impotence if the generals do not have behind them a firm, skillful administration that knows how to anticipate their needs and provide for them. It has been claimed that serious disagreements between Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers and Don Luis de Cordova played a large part in the failure of the expedition. The letters of the commander-in-chief and the reports of the squadron major show that this assertion is unfounded. Although the campaign of the combined fleet constitutes one of the most important episodes of the American War of Independence, its details are little known.[176]

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Most historians have therefore avoided pronouncing on the responsibility of either the minister or the commander-in-chief.[1] We believe we have provided the means to make a definitive judgment on this matter.

The situation of our ships, which was promptly made known on the other side of the Channel, restored the British navy's freedom of action. The court of Madrid, fearing that an enemy squadron would be sent into the strait, recalled Don Luis de Cordova with fifteen ships. Shortly after, the Spanish government, having become certain that extensive preparations were being made in England to rescue Gibraltar, ordered Don Miguel Gaston, who had remained in Brest with twenty-one ships, to sail to Cadiz. France and Spain temporarily abandoned the plan to land in England. Blockading Gibraltar, having sufficient forces in America and Asia to resist the English, and taking the offensive in the Antilles—such was the campaign plan adopted by the Allies for the year 1780.[2] Lieutenant General de Guichen, employed in Duchaffault's army, was called to command the squadron that the French government proposed to send to Martinique. Two ships, the Ajax and the Protée, and a frigate, the Charmante, were fitted out to sail to India. Spain undertook to have twelve ships and ten thousand soldiers in Havana. France's naval forces in the Caribbean Sea were to be no less than twenty-five vessels.

1. In general, historians have tipped the scales in favor of the minister. The failure of the raid on England and the disgrace of the commander-in-chief explain this outcome. In the absence of information, it was assumed that an unfortunate and disgraced man must be guilty. It was said that the poor measures, or even the negligence, of Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers had led to the expedition's failure. It is surprising that the facts of our history are not better known.

2. Letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs to our ambassador to the court of Madrid.[177]

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BOOK VI

Admiral Rodney receives the mission to resupply Gibraltar. - Capture of the ship *Guipuscoa* by the English. - Destruction of Don Juan de Langara's squadron. - Admiral Rodney, after leading his convoy to Gibraltar, sets sail for the Antilles. - Admiral Digby captures the *Protée*. - Arrival in Martinique of Lieutenant General de Guichen's squadron. - Encounters on April 17, May 15, and 19 between the French and English squadrons. - Admiral Don Solano, with a squadron from Cadiz, anchors at Fort Royal. - Health status of the crews and passenger troops. - Departure of Lieutenant General de Guichen with the Spanish squadron. - Count de Guichen leaves Santo Domingo to return to Europe. - Departure of Squadron Leader de Ternay for the coasts of North America, with seven ships and a convoy carrying a force of six thousand men, under the command of Lieutenant General Count de Rochambeau. - Encounter with Commodore Cornwallis's division. - Arrival of the squadron and convoy at Rhode Island. - Inaction of the squadron and troops, due to the superiority of the enemy. - Death of Squadron Leader de Ternay.

I

Admiral Rodney sailed from Portsmouth on January 3, 1780, with a squadron of twenty-one ships. He was convoying transports intended to resupply Gibraltar. This place, which had been blockaded by land and sea since June 1779, was in urgent need of relief. On the 8th, off Cape Finisterre, the English captured fifteen merchant ships and their escort, consisting of the ship *Guipuscoa*, four frigates, and two brigs. On the 16th, in foggy weather, the frigates scouting the British fleet's course sighted several large ships off Cape St. Vincent. Admiral Rodney had the good fortune to find himself in the presence of a Spanish squadron of nine ships, commanded by Admiral Don Juan de Langara.[178]

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This squadron was pursuing the tack that brought it closer to the English. Far from being disturbed by this situation, Don Juan de Langara did not change the direction of his course. As if he attached no importance to being promptly informed about the ships he had in front of him, he did not give his frigates the order to move forward to reconnoiter them. When the two squadrons were a short distance from each other, he decided to bear away and make for Cadiz. Admiral Rodney, who did not want to let such a fine prey escape, gave the signal to chase the enemy on a clear course. Around four o'clock in the evening, the best marchers of his fleet arrived within cannon range of the Spanish rearguard. Don Juan de Langara's ships defended themselves with great energy; But the struggle between such disproportionate forces could only end in disaster. At two o'clock in the morning, the *Santo Domingo* had blown up[1] and six vessels were captured.[2] A few days later, Rodney arrived at Gibraltar without having encountered any new ships. In the middle of February, he recrossed the strait with twenty-two vessels, including the *Phoenix*, the *Diligent*, the *Monarca*, and the *Princessa*, captured on the night of January 16.

While the English admiral was so successfully fulfilling his mission, twenty Spanish and four French vessels, forming the squadron charged, under the command of Don Luis de Cordova, with blockading Gibraltar, were anchored in the harbor of Cadiz. This squadron was repairing damage sustained during a gale at the beginning of January. Upon learning of the presence of a British fleet on the coast, Cordova had called a council of the fleet's general officers.

1. Of the six hundred men who made up the crew of this ship, not one was saved.

2. One of the captured ships perished with all hands and property. Another took the English crew prisoner and returned to Cadiz. [179]

All had agreed to move out to meet the enemy. Either because the repair work had not been carried out with sufficient diligence, or because Cordova, having no illusions about the value of his ships, did not believe it prudent to confront the English, the Spanish fleet was anchored off Cadiz at the moment the British squadron crossed the strait. In the absence of Cordova, it was believed that Don Miguel Gaston, who had left Brest on January 13 with twenty-five ships, would arrive in time to fight Rodney. This was not the case, and the enemy was far from Gibraltar before Don Miguel Gaston had yet appeared near Cadiz. After sailing fifty leagues out to sea, Rodney sent Rear-Admiral Digby to England with the prizes and headed for the Antilles. On February 23, Admiral Digby encountered a French convoy bound for India, escorted by the ships *Protée* and *Ajax*, and the frigate *Charmante*. The division commander, Captain de Chilleau, took up position at the rear of the convoy. When night fell, *Ajax* and the transports took a wrong turn and escaped. The English followed the vessel, which was overtaken during the night. After a very fine defense, Captain de Chilleau lowered his flag.

The resupply of Gibraltar, the capture of *Protée* and the Spanish vessels, caused great joy in England. The House of Commons and the House of Lords voted thanks to the commander-in-chief of the English squadron. Admiral Rodney had very successfully accomplished his mission, but it would be pointless to look for the difficulties he had encountered during his crossing from the English coast to the Straits. The engagement of the twenty-one ships he commanded with the nine ships of Don Juan de Langara could not be considered a serious matter. The Spanish forces, which could have opposed the execution of his plans, had not appeared.[180]

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Don Luis de Cordova had remained in Cadiz, and Don Miguel Gaston had put into Ferrol with broken masts, torn yards, and blown sails. Bad weather was the obstacle over which the English had triumphed. Their ships had sailed in good order and without damage. This result brought the greatest credit to Admiral Rodney and his captains; but, in their success, it was fitting to give a share to the arsenals of Great Britain. If the Spanish officers were not, to the same degree as their adversaries, accustomed to squadron navigation, it must be recognized that their vessels were in the worst possible condition for seakeeping. The correspondence of Squadron Leader de Beausset provides us with curious and instructive information on this point.

This general officer commanded a division of four ships that had been attached to Don Miguel Gaston's squadron. Upon his arrival at Cadiz, he reported to the minister the various incidents of his voyage. After painting the situation of the Spanish vessels in the most unfortunate colors, from the point of view of mast and sail, he said: "These vessels are all going so badly that they cannot reach any other warship or escape from it. Thus, they cannot take anything and cannot avoid being taken. The *Glorieux* is a poor sailing ship in the French fleet, and the best in the Spanish fleet. We have many barges that are better than the Spanish frigates. I must give credit to M. de Gaston and his major Mazzaredo. The former is an experienced and prudent general, who has done all he could to establish order in his squadron, and to lead it with great wisdom; the latter is a subject of the first distinction, full of talent and activity. The destruction of Admiral Don Juan de Langara's squadron by the British fleet inspired the following reflections in Squadron Leader de Beausset: "Mr. de Langara's squadron would have escaped the enemy if it had known how to take advantage of the night that was about to fall, the strength of the wind, and take chase at the right time, and if every Spanish vessel seen was not a joint vessel.[181]

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Those of this squadron were surprised being at immense distances from each other. They do not sail otherwise, and their negligence and their insecurity on this point is incredible. I have often observed that it would be easy for the enemy to cut off and capture one of these vessels, in full view of their squadron, without it being able to be rescued."

II

The personnel of our crews had been seriously affected by the events of the 1779 campaign. At the beginning of 1780, we had not yet managed to replace the sailors that epidemic diseases had taken from the ships of Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers. It was necessary either to disarm ships, or to increase the proportion of soldiers entering into the composition of the crews of the various vessels of the fleet. It was on this last option that the minister settled. New regiments, belonging to the land army, were placed at the disposal of the navy. The officer corps, very few in number at the start of hostilities, had become completely insufficient. Lieutenant General de Guichen encountered the greatest difficulties in forming the staff and crews of his squadron. He set sail on February 3, to go to the Antilles with "poorly armed" vessels, as he wrote to the minister.[1] It was known in Paris, through a dispatch from squadron leader de Lamotte-Picquet, that the English were cruising to the windward of Martinique, in order to intercept the relief supplies sent to the Windward Islands. As a result of the enemy's extreme surveillance, our colonies were completely deprived of food and supplies.

1. Letter from Lieutenant General de Guichen to the minister, dated January 28, 1780.[182]

The minister particularly recommended that Lieutenant General de Guichen ensure the safety of his convoy. He ordered him to evacuate any English possessions he might manage to capture in the Caribbean Sea, after destroying their munitions, stores, and military works. He made an exception for the island of Saint Lucia, which we were to occupy if we succeeded in retaking it from the English. The minister invited the commander of our squadron "to hold the sea as far as the forces England maintained in the Windward Islands would allow, without unduly compromising those entrusted to him." The Count de Guichen arrived in Martinique on March 23, 1780, without having sighted the enemy. He anchored in the harbor of Fort Royal, where he linked up with the division of the Count de Grasse. Squadron Leader Lamotte-Picquet had left on March 13th to join Santo Domingo, where he had been ordered by the Minister. Lieutenant General de Guichen wanted to make an attempt to seize Saint Lucia; but the presence of Admiral Hyde Parker at Gros Ilet, with seventeen ships, prevented him from following through on this plan.

On April 13th, 1780, the squadron set sail to cover the departure of a convoy bound for Santo Domingo, escorted by the *Fier de Cinquante* and the frigate *La Boudeuse.* Three thousand soldiers, commanded by the Marquis de Bouillé, had taken passage on our ships.

1. Lamotte-Picquet was ready to leave for Saint-Domingue when he was detained in the harbor of Fort-Royal by the following order: "As a result of the council of war held, at the request of the Marquis de Bouillé, on the situation of the colony, on board the *Robuste*, on March 12, 1780, Mr. de Lamotte-Picquet is ordered to suspend, until further notice, the execution of his instructions. The position of the colony obliges me, for the good of the service, to take it upon myself to suspend his departure. March 12, 1780. De Grasse." The next day, March 13, the Count of Grasse, having been informed, by notice, of the imminent arrival of Lieutenant General de Guichen, gave squadron leader de Lamotte-Picquet authorization to go to Saint-Domingue. Some historians have blamed Lamotte-Picquet for not remaining in Martinique, where his presence would have given Lieutenant General de Guichen a great superiority over Rodney. We see that Lamotte-Picquet had left Martinique only to comply with the minister's orders.[183]

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It had been agreed between the latter and Lieutenant General de Guichen that we would take advantage of any favorable circumstances to attack the English colonies, and in particular Barbados where the French prisoners were being held. On April 16, the squadron was tacking to windward of Martinique, passing through the Dominica Channel, when our frigates reported the enemy. The next morning, the two squadrons were running on port tack, the English to windward of the French. They were arranged in the following order:[184]

ESCADRE FRANÇAISE.

Ligne de bataille.

Noms des bâtiments.	Nombre de canons.	Noms des capitaines.
Avant-garde.		
Destin	74	Dumaitz de Goimpy.
Vengeur	64	De Betz.
Saint-Michel	60	D'Aymar.
Pluton	74	De Lamarthonic.
Triomphant	80	De Gras-Préville. Comte de Sade, chef d'escadre.
Souverain	74	De Glandevès.
Solitaire	64	De Cicé-Champion.
Corps de bataille.		
Citoyen	74	De Nieuil.
Caton	64	De Framond.
Victoire	74	D'Albert Saint-Hippolyte.
Fendant	74	De Vaudreuil, chef d'escadre.
Couronne	80	Buor de la Charoulière. Comte de Guichen, lieut. général.
Palmier	74	De Monteil, chef d'escadre.
Indien	64	De Balleroy.
Actionnaire	64	De Larchantel.

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Noms des bâtiments.	Nombre de canons.	Noms des capitaines.
Arrière-garde.		
Intrépide	74	Duplessis-Parscau.
Triton	64	Brun de Boades.
Magnifique	74	De Brach.
Robuste	74	Comte de Grasse, chef d'escadre.
Sphinx	74	De Soulanges.
Artésien	74	De Peynier.
Hercule	74	D'Amblimont.

ESCADRE ANGLAISE.

Ligne de bataille.

Noms des bâtiments.	Nombre de canons.	Noms des capitaines.
Avant-garde.		
Stirling Castle	64	Carkett.
Ajax	74	Uvedale.
Elizabeth	74	Maitland.
Princess Royal	90	Hammond. Hyde Parker, contre-amiral.
Albion	74	Bowyer.
Terrible	74	Douglas.
Trident	64	P. Molloy.
Corps de bataille.		
Grafton	74	Collingwood.
Yarmouth	64	Bateman.
Cornwall	74	Edwards.
Sandwich	90	Young. Sir George Brydges Rodney, amiral.
Suffolk	74	Crespin.
Boyne	68	Cotton.
Vigilant	64	Home.
Vengeance	74	Hotham.

Noms des bâtiments.	Nombre de canons.	Noms des capitaines.
	Arrière-garde.	
Medway	60	Edmond Affleck.
Montagu	74	Houlton. Josuah Rowely, contre-amiral.
Conqueror	74	Watson.
Intrepid	64	Saint John.
Magnificent	74	Elphinstone.
Centurion	64	»

Around one o'clock in the afternoon, Admiral Rodney let them arrive by a movement all at once, and it formed parallel to our line. The firing began as soon as the two squadrons were within cannon range. The engagement had already lasted for some time, when Lieutenant General de Guichen noticed that Rodney was maneuvering to pass, with his ship the *Sandwich*, into a gap that the *Actionnaire*, by drifting, had left in our line. He immediately signaled his fleet to tack luff for luff, all at once. Our movement was barely indicated when the English returned to close-hauled. Count de Guichen canceled his first order, but some ships, not having seen his signal in time, fell to leeward. The French squadron let bear, in order to form up on these ships. The enemy having continued to hold the wind, the firing ceased at four thirty. Several English ships had very serious damage. Admiral Rodney went over to the *Conqueror*, abandoning the *Sandwich*, which was in danger of sinking for twenty-four hours. In this engagement, we had one more ship than the English, but they had two three-deckers, while our strongest ships, like the *Couronne* and the *Triomphant*, carried only eighty guns.[185]

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Finally, we had more sixty-four-gun ships than our adversaries. On the 17th, when day broke, our lookouts fruitlessly scanned the horizon; the British fleet had disappeared.

On May 9, the French squadron was making preparations to attack Gros Ilet on Saint Lucia. Six hundred men had already embarked on the frigates when the enemy was reported to leeward. The French, whose maneuver was imitated by the English, held to the wind, tacking to starboard. As soon as the two squadrons were out of the channel, Count de Guichen left the ship with the intention of engaging in a general battle.[1] Admiral Rodney, who wanted to lure us away from Saint Lucia and Martinique, took chase to the southwest. Several days passed during which the two squadrons remained in sight of each other. On the afternoon of May 15, our army, which had gained the advantage of the wind due to the changing breeze, headed towards the enemy. Successive shifts in the wind altered the relative position of the two fleets and delayed the moment of engagement. At nightfall, the two squadrons filed past on opposite tack, the French to windward of the English. When the two vanguards arrived within cannon range, firing began. Admiral de Guichen, fearing that his adversary would attempt to cut off his rearguard, quickly turned his ships around to be on the same tack as the enemy. Before this evolution was complete, night had fallen, and the English had moved away. On May 19, the English appeared determined to accept a new engagement.

1. "I tacked ahead of the enemy, in order to force them to leave the channel to fight them. When the English were out, I arrived, tailwind, at them, three days in a row, to present combat to them and engage in a general affair, to which Admiral Rodney refused, continually bending to draw us to the south, where I followed him to force him into combat. (*Letter from Lieutenant General de Guichen to the minister*.)[186]

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Around three o'clock in the afternoon, the two fleets were sailing opposite tacks, with winds from the east to east-southeast. The leading ships of the French army, drawn up in line of battle, tacks to port, passed ahead of and a short distance from the vanguard of the English fleet, which was sailing on tack to starboard. The latter, instead of continuing on its course, which would have led it to cut our line, a few ships behind the leader, gave way in a successive movement. The two squadrons filed past opposite tacks in two parallel lines. The firing, which had begun as soon as the two vanguards were within cannon range, soon became very intense. Admiral Rodney, believing in the possibility of enveloping our rearguard, signaled his vanguard to tack and haul in, in order to place our last ships between two fires. This movement was barely confirmed when the Count of Guichen ordered his vanguard and the main body to tack from wind to wind, all at once. Before this evolution was completed, the English admiral, realizing the futility of his attempt, canceled the order he had given. The firing ceased as soon as the last French ship had passed the rearguard of the English line. The enemy ran on the starboard tack, and the next day was not seen again. Several English ships had been badly treated during this last engagement. The *Cornwall* was only able to reach Saint Lucia thanks to the good weather and the efforts of its crew. The damage to our ships was not serious. Our losses in the fighting of April 17, May 15, and May 19 amounted to one hundred and fifty-eight killed and eight hundred and twenty wounded.

1. Among the dead were: Messrs. de Guichen and de Coetivy, lieutenants; de Cheffontaine and de Ramatuelle, ensigns; de Vassal and de Gazan, auxiliary officers; de Seguin, de Montcourrier, d'Aiguily, and de Bouville, infantry officers. Messrs. Dumaitz de Goimpy, Dumas, and de Cohant d'Aymar, captains; de Lambour, de Rieux, de Chambellé, de Gantès, de Blois, and Hurant, ensigns, were among the wounded.[187]

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Lieutenant General de Guichen suffered the grief of losing his son, who was serving in the squadron as a lieutenant.

With our ships having only six days' worth of supplies left, the commander-in-chief headed for Fort Royal, where he anchored on May 22. Judging by the damage to the English vessels, the French gained a marked advantage over their adversaries in the battles of April 17, May 15, and May 19. Nevertheless, the enemy achieved their intended goal, since the Count de Guichen and the Marquis de Bouillé were unable to attack the British possessions in the Windward Islands. The two admirals conducted themselves with extreme caution in these three encounters. Both displayed considerable skill, but their tactical resources served them less for attacking than for defending. On April 17 and May 15, Rodney seemed to seek decisive action, but his attempts, although very timid, to achieve this result were immediately repulsed. The English admiral complained very vigorously about some of his captains. The French admiral, on the contrary, showed himself satisfied with his squadron. "If I have been fortunate enough," he wrote to the minister, "to have a decided advantage over the enemy, I owe this satisfaction to the bravery and accuracy in the execution of signals of the captains who fought under my orders. The smaller vessels withstood, with the greatest firmness, the fire of the enemy's strongest. The *Artésien* and the *Sphinx*, small vessels, held out for an hour against three vessels, one of which had three decks. Finally, Monseigneur, all the captains distinguished themselves. This is a justice that I render them with great satisfaction." "He drew the minister's attention in particular to the squadron's major, Captain Buor de la Charoulière, an officer of great merit. Although Lieutenant General de Guichen had exercised his command very honorably, he found the responsibility that weighed upon him much too heavy, and he resolved to decline the burden.[188]

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He wrote to the minister on May 28, that is, upon his arrival in Martinique: "I await your orders, Monseigneur, and my recall, having the honor of assuring you most sincerely that the command of such a considerable squadron is infinitely beyond my strength in every respect, and that my health could not withstand such continual fatigue and anxiety; therefore I dare hope, Monseigneur, that you will be kind enough to excuse me."

In the first days of June, a Spanish frigate arrived in the harbor of Fort Royal. It preceded by a few days a squadron of twelve vessels that was heading for Havana. This squadron was escorting a convoy, on which were embarked considerable equipment and ten thousand five hundred soldiers. Admiral Don Solano, under whose command it was placed, wanted his landing on the Windward Islands to be protected by the French. Count Guichen informed him of the position of the English; he asked him to send his convoy to Saint-Pierre and to come with his squadron to the bay of Fort-Royal. This proposal was rejected by the Spanish admiral who said he was obliged to go, without loss of time, to Puerto Rico. On June 9, Count Guichen rallied him with fifteen vessels, the only ones that were fit to put to sea. After long negotiations, Don Solano decided to anchor in the harbor of Fort-Royal, and to send his convoy to the harbor of Basse-Terre. Lieutenant General Guichen and the Marquis de Bouillé made vain efforts to induce the Spanish to take part in some enterprise, either against Rodney's squadron or against the English islands. Not only did Don Solano refuse to consent, but he also asked to be accompanied to his destination. Lieutenant General de Guichen had received orders from the minister to leave the Windward Islands during the wintering season. He was to go to Santo Domingo, and from there return to Brest, escorting a merchant fleet.[189]

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The Spanish admiral's insistence led him to leave a little before the time set by his instructions. The health of the crews could, if not justify, at least explain the Spanish admiral's conduct. An epidemic disease was causing a large number of casualties aboard his ships. "I agree that the state of this fleet," wrote Lieutenant General de Guichen to the minister, "was miserable due to the number of sick people. If the Spanish squadron had arrived a month earlier, in a state to undertake something, we could have successfully attacked the enemy. In the position it arrived in, it is to the King's squadron that it owes its salvation." What it was legitimate to reproach the Spanish admiral for was the lack of resolve he had shown upon arriving in the Dominica Channel. At that moment, he learned with certainty that no enemy force was to be found to leeward. He had to either continue his route, or send his convoy, escorted by a few ships, and join the bulk of his forces with the French squadron. Lieutenant General de Guichen set sail from Fort Royal on July 5 with the Spaniards. After leading them to the entrance of the old Bahama Channel, he went to Santo Domingo. He found in this colony the division of squadron leader de Lamotte-Picquet. This general officer had had an engagement with several ships belonging to Commodore Cornwallis's division. He was cruising, on March 22, 1780, off the coast of Santo Domingo, with the *Annibal*, of seventy-four, on which he had his flag, the *Diadème*, of seventy, the *Réfléchi*, of sixty-four, and the *Amphion*, of fifty. Three sails having been sighted, he gave the order to chase them away on a clear route. The ships in sight were the *Lion*, sixty-four, the *Bristol*, fifty, and the *Janus*, forty. Thanks to its superior speed, the *Annibal* closed very quickly on the English. As soon as it was within cannon range, Lamotte-Picquet opened fire.[190]

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A calm having returned, the *Annibal* fought alone for several hours against the three English vessels. Due to variations in the breeze and the action of the current, the vessels found themselves separated at sunset. The next day, at daybreak, the *Annibal* joined the English once again, and the fight began again with renewed vivacity. The captains of the *Diadème*, the *Réfléchi*, and the *Amphion* were desperate to take no part in the battle, but all their efforts to rally Lamotte-Picquet were in vain. While the *Annibal* repaired some rather serious damage to its masts, the three English vessels sailed away. Shortly afterward, three large vessels, which were soon recognized as English vessels, were sighted. Our division headed for Cap Français, where it anchored the same day. Lamotte-Picquet, wounded during the battle, had not left the deck of his vessel.

Lieutenant General de Guichen found at Cap Français letters from the Chevalier de la Luzerne, our minister to the United States Congress, and from the Marquis de la Fayette, inviting him to go to the coasts of North America. He declined this offer, which was contrary to his instructions. On August 16, he set sail for Europe, leaving squadron leader de Monteil with ten vessels in Saint-Domingue. A sealed dispatch, which he opened, in accordance with the minister's orders, outside the Bahama Channel, informed him that he was to go to Cadiz. He anchored in this port on October 24, with nineteen vessels and his convoy. When Admiral Rodney was informed of our departure, he detached ten vessels to Jamaica, and with the rest of his forces, he headed for New York.[191]

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III

At the beginning of 1780, the insurrection in the English colonies had made little progress. The enthusiasm of the early days had faded, and the American people wondered if they would ever regain the freedom for which they had sacrificed so much. The French government, concerned about this situation, decided to send troops across the Atlantic. This mission was entrusted to Squadron Leader de Ternay, who commanded a division of seven vessels. In mid-April, this general officer was in Bertheaume harbor, waiting for favorable winds to set sail. On the night of May 2, the winds having shifted to the northeast, he set sail with the ships the *Duc de Bourgogne*, with eighty cannons, the *Neptune* and the *Conquérant*, with seventy-four, the *Provence*, the *Éveillé*, the *Jason* and the *Ardent*, with sixty-four, two frigates, the *Surveillante* and the *Amazone*, and thirty transport ships. Six thousand men, commanded by Lieutenant General de Rochambeau, were embarked on the ships of the squadron and the convoy. M. de Ternay was not without apprehension about the possibility of hiding his departure from the English. He knew that Admiral Graves was completing, at Portsmouth, the fitting out of a squadron specially charged with pursuing and fighting him. The French expedition was held up for several days in the Gulf by a westerly gale which suddenly succeeded the northeast breeze with which we had left Bertheaume harbor. Nevertheless, it reached the open sea without having sighted a single enemy cruiser. The instructions of our government prescribed that M. de Ternay should go to Rhode Island, if he learned, upon his arrival on the coast of America, that the island was not occupied by the English.[192]

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After landing General de Rochambeau's troops, he was to remain on the coast and comply with any requests for assistance made to him, either by the general or by the American authorities. However, the minister left him free to decline any proposals that he deemed likely to compromise the squadron under his command. If the naval forces that England maintained on the coasts of the United States were superior to his own, he had the authorization to request reinforcements from the commander-in-chief of our fleet in the Antilles.

On June 20, the squadron was southwest of Bermuda, making broad reach, with winds from the east to southeast, when our frigates reported five vessels in the northeast. These ships immediately steered toward us, covering themselves with sails. After ordering the convoy to form up to leeward of the squadron, M. de Ternay came close, tack to port, in order to get closer to the ships in sight. He had before him the *Hector* and the *Sultan*, of seventy-four, the *Lion* and the *Ruby*, of sixty-four, the *Bristol*, of fifty, and the frigate *Niger*, of thirty-two. These ships were part of Commodore Cornwallis's division, which was returning to the Antilles, after escorting a convoy to the coast of Bermuda. When the English had recognized seven vessels, among the ships that they had taken from a distance for a merchant fleet, they held to the wind with their tacks to starboard. One of their vessels, the *Ruby*, which had chased ahead of its division, found itself under wind. The *Neptune* and the *Jason* were making sail to join it, but the leader of our squadron, noticing that these two vessels were very far from the ship following them in the line, signaled them to reduce sail. The *Ruby*, realizing the dangers of its position, took the port tack. It passed to windward and within cannon range of the *Neptune*, the *Jason* and the *Duc de Bourgogne*, which opened a very lively fire on it.[193]

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The English division contented itself with firing at us from afar to protect its return. Mr. de Ternay, fearing to expose his convoy to Commodore Cornwallis's attempts, did not pursue the *Ruby*. He tacked, and the two squadrons ran close-hauled, tacks to starboard, the English to windward and at a great distance from the French. As soon as night fell, the commodore resumed his original course, while Mr. de Ternay rallied his convoy and headed for the American coast. On July 4, a little before sunset, the squadron arrived at the mouth of the Chesapeake, when the frigates reported ten or twelve sails at anchor in the bay. Mr. de Ternay, believing himself to be in the presence of Arbuthnot's and Graves' forces, took several wrong turns during the night, and the next day, he set course for Rhode Island. On July 12, after several days of navigation made difficult by persistent fog, the expedition's ships anchored off Newport. One of the transports, which had been lost sight of on July 8, headed for Boston, the rendezvous assigned to all ships in the event of separation.

The mission assigned to Squadron Leader de Ternay was fortunately fulfilled. However, very strong criticism arose against his conduct; he was blamed for not having made more of an effort on June 20 to reach Commodore Cornwallis's division, or at least the *Ruby*. We will examine the validity of these criticisms. The Chevalier de Ternay had received orders from the Minister to lead the troops that France was sending to the aid of the Americans to their destination as quickly as possible. This general officer could not be unaware of the importance attached to the mission entrusted to him. In the current state of affairs in the United States, the landing of a French corps was an event of great political and military significance. It was therefore a matter of great honor to fulfill the obligations incumbent upon it in the government's plan of campaign.[194]

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An advantage gained over the ships we had encountered at sea would have benefited our naval forces in the Antilles, since Commodore Cornwallis was on his way to join Admiral Rodney. There was no doubt about that, but it was equally certain that a truly significant success would have been required to compensate for the expedition's failure. Events, moreover, showed how legitimate Mr. de Ternay's concerns were. Admiral Graves, who, as we have said, had orders to pursue him, had left Plymouth in the first days of May with seven ships. His instructions expressly enjoined him to make every effort to capture or disperse the convoy's vessels. The English had received, in the Channel, the westerly gale that had assailed us a few days after our departure. Forced to put into port due to bad weather, Admiral Graves had spent fifteen days in the port of Plymouth. When he put to sea again, he had forced the sails to get ahead of us on the coast of America. On July 13, that is to say, twenty-four hours after our arrival at Rhode Island, his squadron entered New York where Admiral Arbuthnot was with four ships. If our crossing had been delayed by a few days, spent either in pursuing the enemy or in repairing the damage caused by even a successful battle, we would have found the road to Rhode Island blocked by eleven ships. To harm the enemy, whenever possible, is obviously an excellent principle of war, but we must not lose sight of the fact that, on fleets and in armies, obedience is the first of all duties. How could one execute a campaign plan requiring the cooperation of several generals if each of them refused to admit that he was bound by his instructions.

Immediately after our squadron anchored, General de Rochambeau's troops landed on the island of Rhode.[195]

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The health of the expeditionary force was far from favorable for immediate action; we had, on the cadre, more than a third of the effective force, due to the fatigue of the crossing. On July 21, Admirals Graves and Arbuthnot appeared offshore with eleven vessels, including one of ninety, six of seventy-four, three of sixty-four, and one of fifty. On the other hand, the commander-in-chief of the English army, who rightly wanted to fight Rochambeau before he had made his junction with the Americans, proposed to land on the island of Rhode with ten thousand men. The English admirals, backing down from the determination to force the pass under fire from the French squadron, resolved to wait for the arrival of General Clinton, in order to act both on land and at sea. We were not prepared to receive the double attack with which we were threatened. After deducting the sick and the 350 passengers of the transport that had separated from the squadron on July 8, we had no more than 4,000 men fit to bear arms. Finally, the batteries and fortifications necessary to solidify the position of the squadron and the troops could not be built. Some disagreements between Admiral Arbuthnot and General Clinton delayed the departure of the expedition. While our adversaries were losing precious time, our allies were preparing to act. The arrival of a French corps at Rhode Island had revived the somewhat weakened courage of the population. General Washington, skillfully taking advantage of this circumstance, gave orders to several militia regiments to join him. As soon as he had gathered 12,000 men, he crossed the Hudson and threatened New York. On receiving this news, General Clinton ordered his soldiers to land, having already embarked on transports anchored at Huntingdon, in Long Island. At the end of September, Admiral Rodney, who had just arrived from the West Indies, appeared in sight of the island with twenty-one vessels.[196]

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Since July 12, the date of our arrival at Rhode Island, the navy and the army had not remained inactive. Several works, armed with thirty-six and twenty-four-pounder guns, had been erected at Brenton Point (Rhode Island), as well as on Conanicut and Race Islands. These batteries supported our embossing line, or crossed their fire with that of the ships to defend the entrance to the harbor.[1] After reconnoitering our position, the English admiral returned to New York. Squadron Leader de Ternay had written on August 3 to the commander of our naval forces in the Caribbean Sea, requesting him, in accordance with the minister's orders, to send him five vessels. At that time, we only had Arbuthnot's eleven vessels to fight, and this reinforcement would have been enough to restore the squadron, and consequently the army, to its freedom of action. We soon learned that Lieutenant General de Guichen had sailed for Europe with the majority of his ships, and that, from that quarter, we could hope for no help.

M. de Ternay decided to send a ship to France to inform the government of the impotence to which the squadron and troops were temporarily reduced. The frigate *Hermione*, commanded by Lieutenant de la Pérouse, set sail on October 28, with his dispatches and those of General Rochambeau. A gale had scattered the English ships that usually kept watch off the island. Nevertheless, *Hermione* was sighted by some enemy cruisers; thanks to her superior speed, she escaped their pursuit.

1. Squadron Leader de Ternay wrote the following about the dangers of the squadron's position at Rhode Island: “I have made the seaward side as strong as it can be by the numerous batteries I have erected. But I do not forget that the enemy squadron and transports can enter through the western channel, between Conanicut and the mainland, anchor in the north of the harbor I currently occupy, and make the descent without my being able to obstruct them.” [197]

During the month of November, Admiral Rodney returned to the West Indies, leaving twelve ships with Admiral Arbuthnot. The latter anchored in Gardner Bay, at the tip of Long Island, to monitor the French squadron. December was marked by an unfortunate event in Rhode Island: Squadron Leader de Ternay died after a few days of illness.

On December 15, 1780, Admiral Rodney attacked the island of Saint Vincent, but was repulsed and withdrew to Saint Lucia.[198]

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BOOK VII

Capture of a convoy of sixty sailboats by the combined fleet, under the command of Don Luis de Cordova. - Arrival in Cadiz of Lieutenant General de Guichen. - D'Estaing takes command of the French vessels assembled in the harbor of Cadiz, and brings them back to Brest. - The court of London makes futile efforts to persuade Holland to take part in the war as an ally of Great Britain. - The actions of the English navy arouse general discontent among the neutral powers. - Convention concluded between Russia, Denmark, and Sweden to ensure the freedom of maritime trade. - Difficulties arising between Holland and Great Britain. - Rupture between these two powers. - Late accession of Holland to the plan of armed neutrality.

I

In the spring of 1780, the British Admiralty had assembled forty-five ships of the line in the Channel ports. We had no other force to oppose than Lieutenant General Duchaffault's squadron. However, following the dispatch of the Count of Guichen to the Antilles and of M. de Ternay to America, the Brest squadron was reduced to twelve or fifteen vessels. We could no longer ensure the return of the vessels expected in this port. It was the fear of compromising the ships of the Count of Guichen that had determined the minister to give this general officer the order to go to Cadiz. Since taking part in the war, Spain had no other objective than Gibraltar. To please this power, twenty French vessels, leaving the ports of the Mediterranean and the Ocean, had ranged themselves under the flag of Lieutenant General Don Luis de Cordova.[199]

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As a result of these dispositions, the English, with their Canal squadron, held in check the forces we had at Brest and Cadiz. Enemy cruisers freely roamed the waters between Cape Lizard and the strait. A division, commanded by a very skilled officer, Commodore Johnstone, made numerous captures on the coast of Portugal. Things had reached the point where communications between Ferrol and Cadiz were not assured. In July, the court of Madrid agreed to send Don Luis de Cordova to sea. This admiral was to cruise from Cape Saint Vincent to the heights of Vigo, pushing his broadsides to within fifty leagues of land.[1] Thirty-two Spanish and French vessels left Cadiz on July 31. On August 9, the fleet chased a large number of sails, which were sighted off Cape Saint Vincent. It was an enemy convoy of sixty-four ships, sailing under the escort of a seventy-four-man ship, the *Ramillies*, and two frigates. Some of these ships were carrying troops and supplies to India and America. Squadron Leader de Beausset, with the light squadron, set out in pursuit of the escort, but was unable to reach it. Sixty-one ships were captured; the number of prisoners, including the soldier passengers, rose to three thousand one hundred and forty-four. A few days later, the Franco-Spanish army returned to Cadiz with its prizes. Lieutenant General d'Estaing, sent on a mission to Madrid by the French government, was to examine, in concert with the ministers of the King of Spain, what could be undertaken with the naval forces of the two nations.

1. The purpose of the Spanish squadron's sortie was determined, as follows, in the instructions sent by the Spanish government to Cordova: 1. To intercept the vessels and frigates under the command of Commodore Johnstone, and the corsairs scattered around these waters; 2. To protect the landing of the Spanish and French vessels which come to reconnoiter the coasts; 3. To ensure communications from Ferrol to Cadiz.[200]

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If our allies persisted in remaining near Gibraltar, Count d'Estaing was ordered to take command of the French ships and bring them back to Brest.

Charles III considered that Spain had made a sufficient sacrifice for the common cause by sending twelve ships to Havana. He rejected any arrangement that would not allow him to keep Cordova's squadron within range of the strait. D'Estaing went to Cadiz and set his flag on the 110-gun ship *Le Terrible*. The Spanish government offered him Cordova's assistance should he deem it necessary to approach Lieutenant General de Guichen. D'Estaing did not believe that the ships expected from the Antilles had anything to fear from the enemy. Assuming that the eagerness of the court of Madrid concealed a secret desire to keep him on the Spanish coast as long as possible, he declined this offer. Lieutenant General de Guichen anchored at Cadiz on October 23rd with nineteen ships and the merchant fleet from Santo Domingo. Commander de Suffren accompanied the ships bound for the Mediterranean with five ships and two frigates. On November 7th, thirty-eight French ships set sail for Brest. The merchant ships bound for the ocean ports left with the squadron. Eight Spanish ships sailed with us as far as Cape Lagos. D'Estaing arrived at Brest after a crossing of fifty-seven days.[1]

1. In a letter written during this crossing by Count d'Estaing to squadron leader de Lamotte-Picquet, who was ill at the time, we read: "Generals such as yourself are, in the King's service, a cure for all ills, and the sight of the King's enemies is a sure remedy for such ills. " We see the nature of the commander-in-chief's relationship with one of his principal lieutenants. We recall that in 1778, Captain Cardonnie commanded the *Diadème*, which was the leader of the fleet at the Battle of Ushant. He had lost his command following this affair. On June 3, 1780, the minister had given him command of the *Actif*. This ship was among those that d'Estaing was bringing back to Brest. During the crossing, the commander-in-chief wrote to him: "Mr. d'Estaing has the honor of thanking Mr. Chevalier de la Cardonnie. The ship *Actif* has always been one of the most accurate and prompt in all its maneuvers; it has no need of indulgence, and the general asks him to accept the homage of his approval and his praise. Talent and will repair the damage and the defect in the sails. I have the honor to be with the same feelings that Mr. the knight of Cardonnie wishes to have for me...."[201]

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II

Since the outbreak of hostilities, England had been striving to forge alliances on the continent. Its main focus had been on Holland, with which it had long-standing ties. Since the negotiations with that power had not been successful, the court of London instructed Sir Joseph York, its representative in The Hague, to officially request troops and ships from the Dutch government. The English claimed that the United Provinces of the Netherlands, by virtue of a secret article in the treaty of February 19, 1674, the provisions of which were repeated in the treaties of 1678 and 1716, were obliged to provide them with assistance.[1] The States-General decided that no prior commitment obliged them to provide the assistance requested by the court of London.[2]

1. The fifth article of the perpetual defensive alliance between our court and the States-General, concluded at Westminster on March 3, 1678, in addition to a general obligation to provide assistance, expressly stipulates that "whichever of the two allied states is not attacked will be obliged to break with the aggressor two months after the attacked party has requested it. Declaration of war against the Dutch. Manifesto of the King of England, December 17, 1780.

2. "And as for the assistance requested, their High Powers cannot conceal their surprise that His Britannic Majesty believed he could insist, with the slightest appearance of justice or equity, on the assistance stipulated by the treaties, at a time when he had already previously evaded the obligation imposed by the treaties on him towards the Republic."

(Counter-manifesto of the Dutch, in response to the manifesto of the King of England, dated December 19, 1780.)[202]

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The Dutch navy brought masting and construction timbers to our ports. Article 4 of the commercial treaty concluded on December 1, 1674, between the United Provinces and England expressly stated that masting and construction timbers were not included among the contraband war goods. The point of law mattered little to England, long accustomed to imposing its will on the maritime world. What it wanted was to prevent commercial relations that were of particular importance to our navy. In one of the treaties concluded between Great Britain and Holland, there was a clause prohibiting either power from supplying the enemy of the other with weapons, munitions, and vessels. Based on this text, the London court declared that the importation into France of construction timber, although these objects were specifically designated in the 1674 trade treaty as not being subject to seizure, constituted aid given to a power hostile to Great Britain. It requested, or rather demanded, that this article be interpreted in The Hague in this sense. While this question was being dealt with diplomatically, the English navy captured the Dutch ships carrying the goods that were the subject of the debate to France and Spain. These ships were declared safe havens by the British courts. In order to facilitate the pending negotiations, the cabinet of Saint-James agreed to return these vessels to their owners, but it appropriated the cargoes, the price of which it paid, according to an estimate made by experts. Holland yielded, and the doctrine supported in London was accepted by the ministers of the Republic. It was agreed that the timbers for masts and construction would henceforth be considered war contraband. The Duke of Vauguyon represented France at the States-General. Through his sagacity and skillful conduct, this diplomat had succeeded in reestablishing our influence in a country where the British envoy had long enjoyed undisputed authority.[203]

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Thanks to his efforts, a party had formed that leaned toward our alliance and on which we could rely. The Duke of Vauguyon spoke out forcefully against the measure taken at England's request. This concession was a flagrant violation of the neutrality that Holland was bound to observe toward belligerents. France, which asked nothing for itself, had the right to demand that no favors be granted to the power with which it was at war. The Versailles cabinet declared that, if the States-General persisted in their resolution, the Republic's ships would be deprived of the benefit of the liberal provisions contained in the first article of the regulation of July 26, 1778. Finally, it threatened Holland with an increase in the duties to which its trade with France[1] was subject. The very firm attitude of our government triumphed over English influence. The Duke of Vauguyon received assurances that no changes would be made to the treaties previously concluded with Great Britain.

Holland soon found itself facing new difficulties. Captain Paul Jones of the American Navy was cruising off the coast of Scotland with a small division composed of the American frigates *Bonhomme Richard* and *Alliance*, and the French privateer *Vengeance*. On September 23, 1779, he encountered an English convoy escorted by the frigate *Serapis* and the corvette *Comtesse de Scarborough*.

1. The threats of the French government were beginning to be implemented. The provisions of Article 1 of the regulation of July 26, 1778, were suspended, as far as the Dutch navy was concerned. However, the Versailles cabinet made an exception in favor of the cities of Amsterdam and Harlem. These two cities had protested against the favor granted to England to our detriment. These measures were repealed, and things restored to the state they were in before this incident, as soon as the United Provinces had annulled the decision which classified timber and construction timber among the contraband of war.[204]

After a bloody battle, the two English ships lowered their flags. The *Bonhomme-Richard* sank beneath Paul Jones, who crossed over to the *Serapis* with her crew. The incident had been very difficult, and both the American and English ships were unseaworthy. Captain Paul Jones entered the Texel with his prizes to repair.[1] Sir Joseph York immediately sent a note to the Foreign Minister of the Republic demanding the surrender of the *Serapis*, the *Comtesse-de-Scarborough*, and the American crews. The British envoy added that Captain Paul Jones, having no commission from a sovereign power, should be considered a pirate. However much the Stadtholder might have desired to live on good terms with the court in London, public opinion would not have allowed him to agree to such conditions. The presence of two vessels flying the French flag among the American ships also required extreme circumspection. The Dutch government, after careful consideration of the matter, adopted the following solution. It ordered the American division not to be supplied with any supplies suitable for war. Captain Paul Jones was ordered to leave the Texel as soon as he had completed the most urgent repairs. He was warned that force would be used, if necessary, to ensure the execution of these measures.[2] The discontent this solution caused in London led to prompt reprisals.

1. A fourth vessel, the French privateer *Pallas*, which belonged to the American division, rallied to Paul Jones after the battle and entered the Texel with him.

2. The measures indicated below were taken in Paris to resolve this incident. Captain Paul Jones received orders from Franklin to take command of the American frigate *Alliance* and sail from the Texel to North America. He was to compose his crew with Americans, those who were on the *Alliance* and the survivors of the *Bonhomme-Richard*. The captains of the two privateers, the *Vengeance* and the *Pallas*, went with the greater part of their crews on board the *Serapis* and the *Comtesse-de-Scarborough*, on which the French flag was hoisted. The *Pallas* and the *Vengeance* retained only the number of men necessary to sail. The minister ordered that the two English prizes be taken to Brest, and the two privateers to Dunkirk. All these measures were carried out, despite the very active surveillance of the English cruise.[205]

Commodore Fielding, cruising in the North Sea, encountered, on December 26, 1779, a convoy composed of seventeen Dutch ships, sailing under the escort of several vessels commanded by Rear-Admiral Count von Bylandt. The commodore informed the Dutch admiral that he intended to visit his convoy. The latter declared that he would oppose by force the execution of a measure offensive to his country's flag. The very precise instructions from the British Admiralty did not allow the commodore to take this observation into account. The Dutch having fired on the English boats sent aboard the convoy's vessels, Commodore Fielding fired a shot from a cannon into the bow of the ship, which was being manned by Admiral Bylandt. The latter, unwilling to engage in a fight that the inferiority of his forces would have rendered disastrous for his division, responded with his entire broadside, and, when he received the enemy's, he lowered his flag. The English, after capturing nine ships, left the Dutch admiral free to continue his journey. The latter re-hoisted his colors, but, unwilling to part with the ships entrusted to his care, he followed the English to Spithead.

The ships arrested by Commodore Fielding were judged and declared good prizes. "It is of no importance," it was stated in the grounds of the judgment rendered by the British Admiralty Court, "whether the blockade of the enemy coasts is formed by the enclosure of the Pas-de-Calais or by cruises off the ports of Brest and Lorient."[206]

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All the captured vessels had sought to violate the blockade. By virtue of its island position, Great Britain establishes a natural blockade before all the ports of France and Spain. It has the right to take advantage of its position as if it were a gift of Providence. It would be difficult to imagine a more blatant abuse of force. The events we have just recounted aroused public opinion in Holland and united all parties against England. But that power was determined to persist in the course of conduct it had adopted, whatever the consequences might be. Far from admitting that it had wronged Holland, it haughtily complained about Count Bylandt. This admiral, by firing on the boats charged with inspecting the vessels in his convoy, had violated the law of nations. On March 21, 1780, Sir Joseph York demanded more insistently than he had done the previous year, the execution of the clauses contained in the treaties of 1674, 1678, and 1716. He added that, if within three weeks a satisfactory answer was not made to this demand, Holland would be treated like the powers with which England was not bound by any particular convention. Before taking a decision of this importance, the executive power was obliged, by virtue of the Constitution, to consult all the States. While protesting its sincere desire to live on good terms with its former ally, Holland declared that the period fixed by Sir York was insufficient to fulfill this formality. On April 17, the court of London carried out the threat contained in the note of March 21. A royal order, issued in the Council of Ministers, abolished the privileges enjoyed by the trade of the United Provinces, by virtue of the treaties regularly concluded with Great Britain. Instructions were addressed to the cruisers of the British navy, ordering them to bring into English ports any Dutch vessels on board which were found "some effects belonging to the enemies of His Majesty, or effects which are regarded as contraband by the general law of nations."[207]

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They were further instructed to capture any Dutch vessels encountered near our coasts, the French ports, said the court of London, finding themselves, by the mere fact that war existed between the two powers, in a state of blockade. Since the Peace of Utrecht, Great Britain's strength had increased by the condescension shown to it by its adversaries. After its successes in the wars of 1741 and 1756, this power had appeared to consider sovereignty of the seas as one of the legitimate attributes of the English crown. Although it was engaged in a war that demanded, on its part, very great efforts and the use of all its resources, it renounced none of its claims.[1] In its relations with neutrals, it continued to have no other rule than its interests. Its cruisers stopped, under vain pretexts, ships, whatever their flag, carrying maritime supplies to France or Spain. Now, it was known from experience that, with very rare exceptions, ships brought into English ports were lost to their owners.

1. The Chancellor of the Russian Empire, Count Panin, speaking to the English Minister about the complaints that neutrals were making against the actions of the British navy, said: "Three powers, Denmark, Sweden, and Holland, urge the Empress to join them in complaining about the actions of your navy. It is impossible for Her Majesty to view with indifference the vexations to which the northern trade is exposed by your warships and your ships armed for privateering. Your definitions, relating to materials intended for shipbuilding, are so imprecise that you can understand all the productions of our country. The Empress, because of Russia's position in Europe, is obliged to address representations to you. She must insist that the instructions given to your cruisers be modified. It is essential that your commanders henceforth observe, in their relations with neutral vessels, more circumspection." The English minister warmly defended the instructions given by the British Admiralty, to determine the objects concerning naval constructions which were subject to seizure. Finally, he made it clear that the court of London could not accept, on this point, any remonstrance from a friendly power.[208]

However, these were most often goods duly specified in the treaties as belonging to lawful trade. Northern ships, Russian, Danish, Swedish, and Prussian, due to the special nature of their cargo, which almost always included wood, hemp, and tar, were exposed to continual vexation and harassment. This state of affairs aroused great irritation against England in all the courts of Europe. On November 22, 1778, M. de Vergennes wrote to M. de Corberon, our minister in Saint Petersburg: "The Empress would give a striking proof of her feelings of dignity and justice if, by making common cause with Sweden, Denmark, Holland, and Prussia, she were to bring the King of England to more equitable principles regarding the freedom of the seas and the trade of neutrals. She would thus render a great service to all of Europe." Holland is already equipping ships to escort its merchant squadrons, and Denmark has announced that next spring it will put a squadron to sea for the same purpose. Prussia will also be obliged to take a measure of this kind. So many simultaneous armaments can easily give rise to unfortunate incidents and ignite a maritime war that would become general. But the Empress of Russia would have no difficulty in restoring security to the commerce of her States, if, by energetic representations, she would support those that the other nations, neutral in the current conflict, have already decided to make. Denmark, Sweden and Prussia were making very active efforts in St. Petersburg to bring about the formation of a league of neutrals, at the head of which would be Russia. The Chancellor of the Empire, Count Panin, welcomed these overtures. He considered it good policy to maintain a very firm attitude towards England. Sir Harris, better known as Lord Malmesbury, represented the London court in St. Petersburg.[209]

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This diplomat was striving, by all means in his power, to establish a close alliance between Russia and Great Britain. His attempts with the Chancellor having been unsuccessful, he had managed to win over Prince Potemkin. Despite this figure's influence, Count Panin successfully fought Sir Harris's plans.[1]

Such was the situation when an incident at the end of 1779 called everything into question. The practices of the English courts regarding prizes were provoking reprisals from the belligerents, from which the neutrals suffered. The British navy having captured neutral vessels carrying Spanish goods, the court of Madrid ordered its cruisers to arrest all ships, regardless of their nationality, on which English goods were found. Two Russian ships, the *Concordia* and the *Saint-Nicolas*, which were in these conditions, were encountered in the Mediterranean and taken to Cadiz. Empress Catherine resolved to demand resounding reparation from Spain for the insult to her flag. She ordered the arming of a squadron of fifteen ships and five frigates, and a strongly worded note was addressed to the court of Madrid. The English minister was not a stranger to these resolutions.[2]

1. "I consider myself fortunate to have been able to reassure Your Majesty so soon of the success of the attempts of the English minister. By the way Count Panin prevailed in this important affair, he proved that, without enjoying the favor of her Sovereign, He does justice to his enlightenment, and that as long as he lives, he will always support the political system he has imposed on Russia." (Letter from Count Goertz to King Frederick, January 7, 1780.)

Count Goertz was Prussian ambassador to the court of Russia.

2. Since my last report, the intrigues of the English minister have given me new alarms. I had indeed found, in the interview I had with Count Panin, which I mentioned, that this minister was not in his natural state, but was complaining about his health, and, after the account that the French chargé d'affaires gave me of his interview with the favorite, I felt authorized to tell Your Majesty that the new schemes of the English minister would probably not have any effect. On the day of the departure of the post, I was informed that the Empress of Russia, being offended by the fact that Spain had just arrested again a Russian ship, even destined for Spain, the order had just been given to equip immediately fifteen ships of the line and five frigates to protect her flag against any insult. I went first to the Vice-Chancellor to learn what was the situation, expressing to him my worries about the actions of Mr. Harris. He assured me that, until now, this minister had not yet addressed him on these negotiations; that it was true that the Empress was very angry at the actions of the Spaniards; that not only had this Russian ship been arrested and its cargo, destined for Spain, sold at a low price, but that the Russian captain had not even been allowed to set foot on land, nor had he informed the consul of the fact; but that, probably, the Spanish ministry would disapprove of this conduct, and that it could not have any consequences. I told him, on this, that I had been told that there was an order for the navy to equip ships. He replied that it was said in town, but that he could assure me that he had not yet heard of this news, with the anecdote that the Empress must have, herself, timed the order without the assistance of the ministry. (Letter from Count Goertz to King Frederick, February 18 (29), 1780.)[210]

Having learned of the difficulties that had arisen between Spain and Russia, he believed the moment was opportune to make a new effort. He had obtained a private audience with the Empress, through Prince Potemkin, in which he had spared no effort to increase the irritation that this sovereign felt against Spain. The chancellor of the empire had been kept out of this negotiation. All the letters that had been sent, either to Madrid or to neutral courts, bore the Empress's signature.[1]

1. "A very strong proof of how much, at this moment, Count Panin is struggling against favor and that he has little credibility is that, when her Sovereign decided on this naval armament, she ordered her cabinet secretary to write letters to her ministers at the courts of Sweden, Denmark, and The Hague, signed them, and only after that did she inform her ministry that she had ordered the armament of a fleet to protect her trade, and that this matter should be discussed with the neutral maritime powers. The courier was sent to Stockholm, and will go from there to Copenhagen, The Hague, Paris, and Madrid. Since then, Count Panin has taken the matter in hand, and his plan is to turn the negotiation to make an association of neutral powers, against the insults of their flag, in a maritime war, and he hopes, by this, provided that Spain calms by its response the first bitterness, to find the means to deal a significant blow to England by this same step, to which the intrigues of his minister had given rise. The minister has already brought this plan before the Empress, and I am assured that, if She approves it, as is believed, and the other courts agree with it, its principles established for this kind of maritime public law will be less agreeable to England than to any other power. As soon as the Empress of Russia has approved it, a courier will immediately leave with this plan, which will take the same route as the one sent by order of Her Imperial Majesty. (Letter from Count Goertz to King Frederick, March 7, 1780).[211]

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For a moment, Sir Harris may have thought he had achieved his goal, but he was once again defeated by the Russian minister. The latter, while not in favor with his Sovereign, enjoyed considerable influence based on his political ability. The matter of the Concordia and the Saint-Nicolas having been submitted to the council, the chancellor easily persuaded his colleagues that, in the current circumstances, it was impolitic to come to England's aid. He did more; he led his Sovereign to consider the matter in its true light.[1]

1. "I hasten to convey the good news to Your Majesty that Count Panin has just confided in me that I have the greatest probability of once again thwarting the intrigues of Sir Harris. Indeed, his Sovereign having approved the plan of this minister, it appears that the effect of this naval armament, the resolution of which the English minister had managed to have adopted in a moment of ill-humour which he had fomented, could well turn against his nation. Couriers will be sent to Stockholm, Copenhagen, The Hague, Paris, Madrid and Lisbon, both to inform the neutral maritime powers of the intention of this imperial court to protect its trade, and to invite them to meet with Russia to establish principles of public law for the trade of neutral powers during the course of a maritime war, and to make known this resolution and the principles which it believes necessary to establish for the safety of the belligerent powers. Count Panin believes he is sure that Holland will willingly enter into this concert. He is sure of Sweden and Denmark, and he flatters himself that France itself, in order to obtain the productions of the North, which are indispensable to it, will also applaud this plan. Everything depends, as he himself now admits, on the manner in which Spain will explain the just complaints that Russia has addressed to it. If it responds in a satisfactory manner, then he is convinced that everything will fall back on the English minister, whose conduct he cannot sufficiently blame, and he flatters himself that he and the British ministry would repent of having allowed themselves such intrigues. To the compliments that I paid him on these glorious successes, this minister, despite his modesty, did not seem insensitive to me, and the skillful turn that he gave to this important affair, at a critical moment when he is entirely struggling against favor, seems to me indeed a masterpiece, and, given the great admiration that he has for the superior enlightenment of Your Majesty, I am persuaded that, if he approves of what he has just done, it will flatter him extremely." (Letter from Count Goertz to King Frederick, March 10, 1780.)[212]

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Spain, said the Chancellor, was far from claiming that the Russian ships had been legally arrested. This power had conformed its conduct to that of Great Britain, which captured vessels of all nations carrying Spanish goods.[1] While it was legitimate to claim the *Concordia* and the *Saint-Nícolas*, it was above all important to bring the belligerents to a more just appreciation of their duties towards neutrals. The attack on the convoy escorted by Count Bylandt was proof of the correctness of this opinion. What was at stake was a question of public law that concerned all the maritime powers. The Empress, who had been hesitant until then, took a step that drew the attention of all Europe to Russia. On February 28, she addressed a note to the courts of Versailles, Madrid, and London, setting out the principles of international law whose adoption by the belligerents seemed necessary to ensure freedom of maritime commerce. These principles were summarized in the following proposals: Neutral vessels may navigate freely from port to port and along the coasts of nations at war. Effects belonging to the subjects of the said powers at war may be carried freely on neutral vessels, with the exception of war contraband.

1. From the beginning of the present war, the King declared by his ordinances on privateering, published for all to see, that with regard to English goods, products and effects loaded on board vessels flying friendly or neutral flags, His Majesty would conduct himself according to the procedure that the English would use with regard to cargoes of the same type, in order to avoid, by this reciprocity of conduct, the enormous inequality, the prejudice or even the ruin, to which the commerce and the subjects of His Majesty would find themselves exposed." (Letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Spain to the Minister of the Navy, March 13, 1779.)[213]

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The Empress adheres, in establishing this, to what is stated in her commercial treaty with Great Britain of June 20, 1766, extending these obligations to all powers at war. To determine what characterizes a blockaded port, this designation will only be given to one where, due to the disposition of the attacking power with vessels sufficiently close, there is an obvious danger of entry. These principles will serve as a rule in procedures and judgments on the legality of prizes. The Empress concluded by saying that she intended to faithfully observe, as she had done since the beginning of hostilities, the strictest neutrality. But she was determined to give her naval forces the necessary orders to enforce, wherever necessary, the rights of her subjects and the honor of her flag. The Russian note was considered in London as an insult to which, in any other circumstances, a declaration of war would have been met.[1] The current situation did not allow the English government to give free rein to national pride. The initiative taken by Russia and the attitude of the northern courts revealed a danger that had to be carefully avoided.

1. The Empress's declaration was the subject of very lively discussions in England. Lord Shelburne, leader of the opposition in the House of Lords, expressed his astonishment that the Muscovite Empire, which barely thirty years earlier had been a maritime power, should attempt to dictate laws at sea to Great Britain. According to another member of the same House, the Russian manifesto aimed at nothing less than the overthrow of all the rules previously observed in international relations. It is right to say that one cannot be both judge and jury.

The Russian note could be summarized as follows: Free ship, free goods, with the exception of war contraband. There was no question of neutral goods being loaded onto an enemy ship. In an ordinance of the Empress, concerning the merchant flag of all the Russias and dated May 19, 1780, we read the following:

Our subjects must also take care not to embark any belongings belonging to them on ships of nations engaged in war, in order to avoid all inconveniences and unpleasant encounters. The rule most generally followed at that time was that neutral goods were seizable on the enemy ship.[214]

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Without categorically explaining the Russian proposals, the Saint-James cabinet protested its feelings of fairness toward neutrals and its respect for the treaties that bound it to the various courts of Europe. The point on which the London court particularly insisted was its desire to live on good terms with Russia.

At the beginning of 1778, French laws relating to maritime prizes were based on the ordinance of 1661. One of the articles of this ordinance stated: "All ships found laden with goods belonging to our enemies and the goods of our subjects and allies found in an enemy ship shall likewise be fair prizes."[1] In 1744, the legislation on the matter had been slightly modified. The confiscation of enemy goods loaded onto neutral ships had been maintained, but it had been decided that the vessels would be released. Such was the state of the matter at the outbreak of the American War of Independence. The French regulation of July 26, 1778, established the principle that the neutral flag neutralizes enemy merchandise, with the exception of war contraband. Thus, Empress Catherine's declaration was received in Paris with great satisfaction.[2] Spain, which had adopted our legislation on prizes, hastened to support the Russian proposals. During the month of May 1780, Denmark, with the acquiescence of Sweden and Russia, prohibited access to the Baltic Sea to warships from France, England, and Spain.

1. France reserved the right to revoke this regulation if the enemy powers did not grant reciprocity within six months of its publication.

2. There was a difference between the regulation of July 25, 1778, and the proposals contained in the Russian note, which we will point out. Article 2 stated that the effects belonging to the subjects of the powers at war were free on neutral vessels, with the exception of war contraband, while the French regulation pronounced the confiscation of the entire cargo and of the ship, when the contraband goods made up three-quarters of the value of the cargo.[215]

Two months later, the kings of Denmark and Sweden addressed a note to the courts of London, Versailles, and Madrid, in full conformity with Empress Catherine's declaration. Finally, Russia, Denmark, and Sweden bound themselves by a convention aimed at defending, even by force of arms, the rights of their subjects. Russia hastened to notify the belligerent powers of the accession of the other two courts to the plan of armed neutrality, which she had initiated.[1] Prince Galitzin, who represented the court of Saint Petersburg in The Hague, had delivered, on April 3, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic, the declaration addressed by his Sovereign to the belligerent powers. The prince had received from his government the mission of bringing the United Provinces to join the courts of the North in defending the freedom of maritime trade. The States-General decided, on April 24, that special plenipotentiaries would be sent to Saint Petersburg for this purpose. England saw with ever-increasing discontent that Holland was slipping from its influence. An incident which occurred in the month of September further increased the misunderstanding existing between the two nations. Mr. Henri Laurens, former president of the congress, was appointed minister of the United States to The Hague. The vessel on which he traveled to his post fell into the hands of the English. Among his papers was found a copy of a treaty of peace and friendship between Holland and the United States.

1. The powers whose names follow gave their adherence to the principles set forth in the declaration of the Empress Catherine at the times indicated below, namely: Prussia, May 3, 1781; Austria, October 9, 1781; Portugal, July 13, 1782; the Kingdom of Naples, February 1, 1783. The United States Congress had adopted, on October 5, 1780, in public session, the proposals contained in the note from the Empress of Russia.[216]

This treaty was signed on September 4, 1778, by Messrs. Adam de Neufville, acting on the orders of Councilor Van Berckel, a pensionary of the city of Amsterdam, and William Lee, commissioner of the congress.[1]

This document, the existence of which was unknown to the government of the Republic, could only bind one state, that of Holland. The States-General, in a resolution dated November 27, publicly disavowed the conduct of the chief magistrate of the city of Amsterdam. The efforts made by the United Provinces to appease the court in London were useless. By raising these continual difficulties, England wanted to intimidate Holland and force it to submit to its will. Recognizing the impossibility of achieving this result, it decided to make it its enemy. Two parties were disputing the direction of affairs in the United Provinces of the Netherlands. One, headed by the Stadtholder, was in favor of the English alliance; the other, headed by the pensioner of the city of Amsterdam, sought the support of France. The former insisted on the necessity of increasing the forces of the land army, while the latter demanded that the navy be put in a position to defend the honor of the Dutch flag against the insults of England. The result of this clash of influences was that Holland had not armed either on land or at sea. By declaring war on this power, the court of London did not increase the number of its enemies. On the contrary, it saw in the conquest of the Dutch colonies a compensation for the losses it itself might suffer.

1. The first article of this treaty was thus worded: There shall be a firm, inviolable, and universal peace, and a sincere friendship between their High Powers, the States of the seven united provinces of Holland, and the United States of North America, and the subjects and people of the said parts, and between the countries, islands, cities, and towns within the jurisdiction of the said United States of Holland, and the said United States of America, and their people and inhabitants of every condition, without exception of persons or places."[217]

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"If we declare war on Holland," wrote Sir York to Lord Stormont[2] on November 3, 1780, "we shall find that state devoid of artillery and supplies of any kind, having neither fleet nor army, nor any of its possessions outside Europe in a state of defense." Returning to the same subject, he said on December 7: "This country is in no way prepared for war. All are still disposed to consider a struggle with England an impossibility. The executive power, in the government of the Republic, has never ceased to be opposed to the war party. All the establishments of Holland, in the East and West Indies, are currently in a deplorable condition. Among them all, Saint Eustatius, as destitute as the others, is the great mine of profits for Dutch trade. On November 20, the States-General having decided, by a majority of four provinces against three, that the Republic would take part in the league formed by Russia, Denmark and Sweden, England resolved to rush events. Sir York was instructed to demand the punishment of the authorities who had concluded the treaty signed at Amsterdam on September 4, 1778. Unable to obtain this satisfaction, which, moreover, it did not expect, Great Britain recalled its ambassador on December 12, and on the 20th, it sent to The Hague a declaration of war which preceded by a few days the act of accession of the United Provinces of the Netherlands to the maritime conventions concluded on July 9 and August 1 between Russia, Denmark and Sweden. The States-General then hastened to request the powers who had given their adherence to the system of armed neutrality to come to their aid. But the Northern courts, basing their arguments on the fact that the Act of Accession of the United Provinces was subsequent to Great Britain's declaration of war, declined this request.

2. The Foreign Secretary in Lord North's Cabinet.[218]

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The alliance of the Northern Powers did not maintain the brilliance that had presided over its formation. The stipulations relating to the armaments that the three courts were required to make to protect their trade were not faithfully observed. England returned to its old practices, and its cruisers resumed the violent habits that had become traditional in the British navy. Nevertheless, the discussions that took place at this time on these important questions must be considered the starting point of a new public law.[219]

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BOOK VIII

Rodney receives orders to attack the Dutch possessions in the West Indies. - He successively captures the islands of Saint Eustatius, Saint Martin, and Saba. - The colonies of Demerari, Essequibo, and Berbice are occupied by the English. - Capture of the French island of Saint Barthélemy. - Arrival of the Count of Grasse in Martinique. - Engagements of April 29 and 30. - False attack on Saint Lucia. - Capture of Tobago. - The French squadron, after landing at Martinique, heads for Saint Domingue. - Events on the coasts of North America since the beginning of 1781. - Capture of the *Romulus*. - Battle of March 16 between the squadrons of Arbuthnot and Captain Des Touches. - Arrival of the Count de Grasse in Chesapeake Bay. - Appearance of the English fleet. - Engagement of September 5. - Capitulation of Cornwallis. - The Count de Grasse and Admiral Hood return to the Caribbean Sea. - The Marquis de Bouillé recaptures the islands of Saint Eustatius, Saint Martin, and Saba. - Capture of Pensacola and West Florida by the Spanish and the French.

I

Admiral Rodney was at Saint Lucia when he received orders to begin hostilities against the Dutch. He put to sea on January 30, 1781, with landing troops on his squadron, and appeared the same day off Fort Royal Bay. As soon as night fell, leaving Rear-Admiral Drake to watch over four French vessels, he set sail for Saint Eustatius. The governor of this colony had none of the resources necessary to defend himself. Surprised by the sudden arrival of the British squadron, he surrendered the island to General Vaughan on February 3. Two hundred merchant ships and a thirty-eight-gun frigate fell into the hands of the English.[220]

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Rodney detached a division in pursuit of a merchant fleet that had set sail a few days earlier, escorted by a sixty-gun vessel. This convoy, composed of thirty richly laden vessels, was caught and captured. Before surrendering, the Dutch vessel fought valiantly for the honor of its flag.

Since the war had stopped commercial transactions between the subjects of the great maritime powers, the island of Saint Eustatius had acquired particular importance. It was considered, in the Caribbean Sea, a neutral territory on which traders from all countries could meet without danger. At the time the English took possession of it, it contained very considerable quantities of merchandise, belonging to both Dutch and foreigners. Admiral Rodney and General Vaughan, taking no account of this situation, declared everything on the island to be Dutch property. Their agents seized not only the state stores, but also the goods contained in the private stores. The inhabitants, with the exception of the English subjects, were transported to the neighboring islands. These unfortunates, exposed to the most brutal treatment during the crossing, lost their baggage, which was plundered by the sailors. The value of the booty taken at Saint Eustatius, including the captured vessels, reached the enormous sum for that time of seventy-five million francs. General Vaughan occupied the islands of Saint Martin and Saba. The inhabitants of these two colonies suffered no less than those of Saint Eustatius from the rapacity of the victors.[1]

1. The barbaric actions of Rodney and Vaughan aroused universal disapproval. Generous voices were raised in the British Parliament to denounce the violence committed at Saint-Eustache against persons and property. On May 14, 1781, Burke presented a motion calling for an inquiry into the conduct of the two generals. The proposal, opposed by the ministers, was rejected, but it received eighty votes out of two hundred and forty voters.[221]

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Admiral Rodney, having received word from London that French forces were about to depart from Brest for the Caribbean Sea, ordered his lieutenant, Admiral Hood, to proceed off Fort Royal Bay. He was to intercept any ships heading for Martinique. Unwilling to leave to anyone the task of completing the plunder he had begun, Admiral Rodney remained in Saint Eustatius with his ship, the *Sandwich*, a ninety-gun ship, and the *Triumph*, a seventy-four-gun ship. He had some of the goods found on the island sold at public auction; what remained of the spoils of the unfortunate inhabitants of Saint Eustatius was shipped to England on thirty-four merchant ships, escorted by four vessels.

During the month of February 1781, English privateers appeared in the waters of Demerari and Essequibo, and seized several merchant ships. The governor of the Dutch settlements on the coast of Guyana was unable to repel such a weak attack. In order to prevent people and property from being at the mercy of a few adventurers, he informed the British authorities in Barbados that he was ready to place the colony in their hands. He asked, unaware of the calamities he was exposing himself to, that Guyana be treated as the island of Saint Eustatius had been. Troops, dispatched from the Antilles on the frigates *Surprise* and *Barbados*, took possession of the Dutch colony in the first days of March. We must say that the English officers treated the inhabitants in the most generous manner. The French island of Saint Barthélemy was captured on March 15 by Admiral Rodney.[222]

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II

On March 22, 1781, twenty-six ships and four frigates left Brest under the command of Lieutenant General de Grasse.[1] On March 29, the frigate *Concorde*, on which Mr. de Ternay's successor, Squadron Leader de Barras, had sailed, separated from the fleet and headed for its destination. Off the Azores, five ships and one frigate, under the command of Captain de Suffren, headed for the Cape of Good Hope. On April 5, the ship *Sagittaire*, carrying ammunition and six hundred soldiers to reinforce Rochambeau's small army, set sail for Boston. On the 28th, thirty-seven days after leaving Brest, the Count de Grasse arrived in sight of the lands of Martinique. In order to speed up his crossing, he had his ships tow the twenty-three worst-moving vessels in the convoy.[2] Having learned, shortly before sunset, of an enemy squadron, he feared compromising his transports, and he remained off the Pointe des Salines. An officer, whom he had sent to Pointe Sainte-Anne for information, informed him that Fort Royal Bay had been blockaded for forty days by Admiral Hood. The next morning, the French squadron set out. At eight o'clock, our frigates reported nineteen English vessels maneuvering to head upwind, and at eleven o'clock, the two squadrons began to exchange cannonballs. As soon as our army had taken up position to windward of the enemy, our transport vessels entered Fort Royal Bay.

1. The Count of Grasse was in reality only squadron leader, but he had received the provisional commission of lieutenant general.

2. The Count of Grasse had set the example. The three-decker ship, the *Ville-de-Paris*, on which he had his flag, was towing a ship from the convoy.[223]

At the same time, the seventy-four-gun *Victoire*, the *Caton*, the *Solitaire*, and the sixty-four-strong *Réfléchi* set sail, dropping their cables, and joined the fleet. Despite our numerical superiority, the Count of Grasse remained close to land until all the ships in his convoy were safe. He then wanted to close in on the English, but they made sail and moved away. Around six o'clock in the evening, the commander-in-chief had only thirteen ships with him. The other ships of the fleet, although covered with sail, were a long way behind. Several enemy vessels, including the *Russel*, the *Centaur*, and the *Intrépide*, were badly damaged. The *Russel* was on the verge of sinking before reaching Saint-Eustache, where it had received orders to put in.[1] Admiral Hood continued his retreat, stopping to fire on our best marchers when they seemed to want to close in too closely. Realizing that he was playing a dangerous game, he decided, on the evening of April 30, to sail downwind: "I did not think it appropriate," he said in his report, "to continue to defy the enemy; I thought, on the contrary, that it was my duty to arrive downwind, and I gave the signal at eight o'clock in the evening." The next morning, the Count of Grasse could have no illusions about the results of the pursuit. "I saw with pain," he wrote to the minister, "that it was only too true that the Englishman's march was far superior to ours. There were only eleven ships left with me that were within reach of joining; the others, covered with sail, were excessively astern.

1. I must, in truth, Sir, inform you of the satisfaction I felt with the conduct of the crew of the *Ville-de-Paris* during the combat. It seemed that each individual wanted to surpass his comrade, and to distinguish himself from the officers who commanded him directly. These were only occupied in maintaining the silence and subordination established by M. de Sainte-Césaire, flag captain. (Letter from the Count of Grasse to the Minister.)[224]

Some were even out of sight." The Count of Grasse gave up the chase and headed back to Fort Royal, where he anchored on May 6.[1] Admiral Hood obviously had the great advantage over his adversary of commanding a squadron composed of copper-clad vessels. Nevertheless, we must pay tribute to his skill and the confidence he showed in his captains. If some of his ships had remained behind due to damage, he would have been forced to sacrifice them or fight against superior forces. Admiral Rodney, by remaining at Saint-Eustache, had deprived the English squadron of two vessels, including one with three decks. As for the Count of Grasse, it seems that he was too concerned, on April 29, with the safety of his convoy. Admiral Hood had been much less circumspect that day than he had been the next, and perhaps it would have been possible to take decisive action. It seemed to be believed in Paris that the leader of our squadron had not been very well supported by all his captains. The minister wrote to him regarding the day of April 29 and the pursuit of the English squadron. "All your maneuvers were dictated by prudence, zeal, and firmness; but it has not escaped His Majesty that you should have obtained a complete victory if your entire army had supported you. It is undoubtedly to the poor progress of the ships that the lack of unity of your line during the combat and during the chase must be attributed."[2]

1. The French lost M. Fournier de Salmes, lieutenant of the ship, and seventeen crewmen. MM. de Valois, lieutenant of the ship, *Serrigny*, naval guard, Moliny, auxiliary officer, and fifty-three sailors or soldiers were wounded.

2. The minister wrote to him on the same date: I have placed before the King, Sir, the letter you wrote to me on May 22, in which you informed me of your arrival in Martinique with the entire convoy. His Majesty was very pleased with your attention to preserving the vessels that sailed under your escort, and with the good example you set by yourself taking one of the worst sailing ships in tow.... I urges you to maintain the good understanding that has prevailed between you and Mr. de Bouillé. In all circumstances where you operate with the land generals, it will be from this union that successes will be born.[225]

If some minor errors had been made during the day of the 29th or during the night of the 29th to the 30th, they had only been of secondary importance. The poor performance of our ships, only a few of which were copper-clad, was the real reason for the futility of our pursuit. We had been unable to join the English, and consequently, to take advantage of the opportunity that presented itself to crush nineteen ships with twenty-eight, because our equipment was less advanced than that of the enemy.

On May 8, the *Pluton*, of seventy-four, the *Experiment*, of fifty, and some frigates, carrying thirteen hundred men, headed for Tobago. The same day, the squadron positioned itself to windward of Saint Lucia, in order to be able to engage the English if they appeared to windward of the island, and to join them if they arrived from downwind. The Marquis de Bouillé landed at Gros-Ilet during the night with twelve hundred men. After recognizing the impossibility of completing, in a few weeks, the defensive works necessary to protect this position from any attack, he re-embarked with his troops. He brought back with him about one hundred prisoners taken during this short expedition. The squadron returned to Martinique, where it anchored on May 15. On the 22nd, the Count of Grasse was informed that Admiral Hood had left Saint Kitts. Judging by the route taken by the English at the time they were sighted, it was assumed that they were heading for Barbados. A frigate was immediately dispatched to Tobago to inform Captain d'Albert de Rions of the *Pluton* and the commander of the troops, M. de Blanchelande, that the entire fleet was coming to their aid. The squadron embarked three thousand soldiers and set sail.[226]

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The *Russel*, having stopped off Saint Eustatius following damage sustained in the battle of April 28, had informed Admiral Rodney of the arrival of a French squadron in the Caribbean Sea. The latter, tearing himself away from unworthy occupations, had left for Antigua with the *Sandwich* and the *Triumph*. After remaining on that island for a few days to replenish supplies, he went to Barbados, where he found Admiral Hood. Receiving news on the night of May 26 that the French had landed at Tobago, he dispatched Rear-Admiral Drake with six ships to bring reinforcements to the garrison. The French squadron landed on Tobago just as Admiral Drake appeared in sight of the island. The Count of Grasse set out in pursuit, but the English were to windward and at a great distance, and he did not succeed in reaching them. During the night of May 30-31, the expeditionary force joined the troops that had been put ashore on May 24, under the protection of the *Pluton* and the *Experiment*. The Governor of Tobago, General Fergusson, had abandoned the small town of Scarborough, which we had entered, and had withdrawn to Mount Concordia with four hundred soldiers, five hundred militiamen, a few hundred armed Negroes, and ten cannons. Colonel de Blanchelande, not having sufficient forces to attack him with any chance of success, had until then been content to observe him. The Marquis de Bouillé immediately prescribed the necessary arrangements to march, at daybreak, to Mount Concordia. Twelve hundred men, who had been landed to windward of the island, were to take the enemy from behind. The English general, informed of our movements, decamped during the night and headed for a fortified post at the tip of the island. Despite the heat and the difficult roads, our troops marched with great ardor and joined the enemy on the afternoon of May 31. The Marquis de Bouillé sent one of his officers, the Count of Dillon, to General Fergusson to summon him to surrender.[227]

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The general would have liked to resist, but part of his troops, overcome by fatigue, had abandoned him. The militiamen and the few soldiers who remained with him, knowing their numerical inferiority, and knowing, moreover, that they could expect no help, were very discouraged.[1] In this situation, the general found himself forced to accept a capitulation, the terms of which were dictated by the Marquis de Bouillé. On June 2, the English troops laid down their arms and surrendered themselves as prisoners of war. The Marquis de Bouillé showed the population a generosity all the greater because they had made greater efforts to repel us. The considerations the general put forward to explain his conduct are worth reporting. "The militias," he wrote to the minister, "forced General Fergusson to ask me for a surrender, which they left at my disposal, telling me that they relied on my honesty and generosity. I granted them a very good one, which I am sending you. The patriotic manner in which these inhabitants conducted themselves, who even sacrificed their property in the event of war, inspired me with great esteem and deserve consideration."

Upon Rear Admiral Drake's arrival in Barbados, Admiral Rodney had set sail with all the forces at his disposal. On June 4, approaching Tobago, he learned that the island had been in our hands for forty hours. The two squadrons spent the day of June 5 in sight of each other. While we were trying to reach the English, the latter, who were to windward, were making sail to maintain this advantage. When night fell, Admiral Rodney resumed the route to Barbados.

1. The Earl of Dillon soon joined General Fergusson, fulfilled my commission, and found the troops and militia very willing to surrender, except for the indefatigable governor, the most stubborn and proud of all the Scots, who always wanted to return to his stronghold. (Letter from the Marquis de Bouillé to the minister.) This joke from Mr. de Bouillé is a compliment to the English general.[228]

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Our officers expected a general battle, and their disappointment was great when they were certain that the enemy had disappeared. We had twenty-three ships and the English twenty-one, but most of the English vessels were stronger than ours. After re-embarking the troops not intended to garrison Tobago, the Count of Grasse set sail. He called successively at Grenada and Saint Vincent to ensure that these two islands were well supplied. On July 5, the French squadron, escorted by a convoy of two hundred merchant ships, set sail from Martinique for Santo Domingo.

III

After the death of M. de Ternay, command of the French forces stationed on the coasts of North America passed into the hands of the most senior officer, Captain Des Touches. During January 1781, Admiral Arbuthnot's squadron was surprised at sea by an extremely violent gale. The *Culloden* ran aground, the *Bedfort* lost its mast, and for some time the admiral had no news of a third vessel, the *America*. Taking advantage of this circumstance, Mr. Des Touches sent the vessel *Éveillé*, the frigates *Gentille* and *Surveillante*, and the cutter *Guêpe* into Chesapeake Bay. The captain of the *Éveillé*, Mr. de Tilly, was charged with destroying a flotilla, under the command of General Arnold, which was committing numerous acts of depredation on the coasts of the State of Virginia. When Admiral Arbuthnot, after repairing his vessels in New York, reappeared in Gardner Bay, our ships were recalled to Rhode Island.

1. One of our ships, the *Hector*, which had lost its bowsprit and foremast in a collision with the *Caesar* on the night of May 30-31, had left the squadron. The Count of Grasse had sent it to Grenada.[229]

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Mr. de Tilly had been unable to capture the English flotilla, which had put itself out of reach by sailing up the Elizabeth, but he had captured the forty-four-gun *Romulus*, a brig, a schooner, and several transports. The Americans, deeply interested in driving General Arnold out of Virginia, gathered some troops to fight him. General Rochambeau and Commander Des Touches, strongly solicited by Washington, promised to lend their support to this expedition. It was agreed that our squadron, on which eleven hundred French soldiers would take passage, would sail to Chesapeake Bay. The mission the navy had accepted was, due to the poor performance of some of our vessels, difficult to execute. Commander Des Touches could only succeed in this undertaking on the condition that he concealed his sortie from Arbuthnot's frigates. It was also necessary that he be far enough ahead of the enemy when his departure was known, so as not to have to fear being overtaken. He set sail on March 8, 1781, at nightfall, with one ship of eighty, two of seventy-four, four of sixty-four, the *Romulus* which he had armed and a frigate of thirty-two. The squadron headed offshore, and, at daybreak the next day, no ship was seen on the horizon. On March 16, in foggy weather, we were making for land, from which we supposed ourselves to be about fifteen leagues, when, in a clearing, our frigates discovered the enemy. Admiral Arbuthnot, promptly informed of our departure, came in all haste to bar our route to the Chesapeake. The English admiral, whose flag was flown on the ninety-eight-gun *London*, had, in addition, two seventy-four-gun ships, four sixty-four-gun ships, one fifty-gun ship, and three frigates. The two squadrons were running, tacks to port, with southwest winds, the English to windward of the French.[230]

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Shortly after, the breeze having shifted to the north-northwest, the English held to the wind on starboard tack, while the French took the broadside. Thanks to their superior speed, our adversaries quickly found themselves in our waters. Then forming up on the same tack as us, they covered themselves with canvas in order to reach our rearguard. Commander Des Touches signaled his squadron to tack luff for luff on the counter-march, and he headed towards the enemy with the intention of extending them to starboard. Fire opened as soon as the first ships of both squadrons were within cannon range. The English vanguard having let bear, our ships received the order to come close on port tack in a successive movement. This maneuver caused our entire squadron to file past the front of the English line, from which the first three ships moved away in disorder. The enemy rearguard arrived alongside our last ships, just as they were completing their evolution. The fight was then very lively, but the English having reduced sail in order to cover the ships which had suffered at the beginning of the action, the two squadrons overtook each other and the firing ceased. The French and the English took the port tack and ran towards the land, under small sails. Although our adversaries had the advantage of the wind, they made no movement which indicated, on their part, the intention of renewing the fight. During the night, while our squadron spent in haul-up and with fires lit, Admiral Arbuthnot entered the Chesapeake. The *Conqueror* and the *Ardent* were not in a position to withstand a gale. The lower masts of these ships had been pierced by cannonballs, and the rudder of the *Conqueror* was out of order. The French captains, who met the next day on board the *Duc de Bourgogne*, were of the opinion that, in the state in which the *Conquérant* and the *Ardent* were, the squadron could not fulfill its mission. Commander Des Touches, following the advice of the council, brought his ships back to Rhode Island.[231]

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We had put up an honorable fight, but we had failed in our undertaking. If the French squadron's crossing had been faster, the English admiral would have found our ships stuck at the entrance to the James River, in an impregnable position, and the planned expedition would have taken place. However, the slowness of our crossing, and consequently our failure, had no other cause than the speed of those of our ships that were not copper-clad. "The astonishing disproportion in speed that this causes," wrote the leader of our squadron to the minister, "has always placed great obstacles in the way of all the movements I have attempted, and I can tell you, Monseigneur, that I would have prevailed over the English in the Chesapeake if the four ships of my squadron that are not copper-clad had not, due to lack of speed, remained several leagues astern and to leeward." Such were the consequences of the mistake we had made in not applying to our ships the important improvement that our neighbors had adopted. The report in which the Chevalier Des Touches informed the minister of the various incidents of the day of March 16, contained the following passage: "The captains commanding the ships of the squadron gave me the highest praise for their staffs and crews; I must give you that of Messrs. de la Grandière, de Marigny and de Médine. M. de Médine, commanding the *Neptune*, was wounded in the head. This officer knew how to take advantage of a very interesting moment in the combat, when a leading ship of the enemy, no longer able to withstand the fire of those of my vanguard, was forced to arrive and present the rear. The *Neptune* placed itself within musketry range of its stern and enfiladed it with its entire broadside, without the English ship being able to respond with a single cannon shot." Our losses had amounted to seventy-two killed and one hundred and twelve wounded. The *Conquérant* and the *Ardent*, commanded by Messrs. de la Grandière and de Médine, had borne the brunt of the battle.[232]

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The *Conquérant* had forty-three killed and fifty wounded, the *Ardent* fourteen killed and thirty-nine wounded. The Chevalier Des Touches had found among his comrades not only the obedience he was due, but the most devoted support. The captains of his squadron had done nothing but their duty, but in light of the accusations of indiscipline leveled against Louis XVI's navy, it is not out of place to point this out.

Since the beginning of the war, there had been no encounter between the squadrons of France and England off the coasts of the United States. Thus, the prestige that the successes of the last two wars had given to the flag of Great Britain had suffered no harm in this part of the world. Now, there was no doubt that Arbuthnot's squadron, whose superiority over ours, without being very great, was real, would have declined the consequences of a second engagement. If the French had not gained, on March 16, any serious advantage, the battlefield would have remained theirs. This result, although incomplete, produced a very happy effect on the minds of the American people, inclined, despite the irritation they harbored against our adversaries, to believe in their maritime superiority. The congress, sharing the general opinion and desiring, on the other hand, to show its gratitude to France, adopted, on April 5, the following resolution: "Decrees that the President will transmit the thanks of the United States, assembled in congress, to the Count of Rochambeau and to the Chevalier Des Touches commanding the army and the squadron sent by His Most Christian Majesty to the aid of his allies, for the zeal and vigilance that they have shown, on every occasion, to fulfill the generous intentions of their Sovereign and the expectations of these States; that he will present their thanks to Chevalier Des Touches and to the officers and crews of the vessels under his command, for the bravery, firmness and good conduct they have shown in the enterprise recently undertaken against the enemy, at Portsmouth, Virginia, in which, although unforeseen events prevented them from fulfilling their object, the stubborn combat, so advantageously and so courageously sustained, on March 16th last, off the headlands of the Chesapeake Bay, against a superior English squadron, does honor to the arms of His Most Christian Majesty, and is a happy omen of decisive advantages for the United States."[233]

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The English government ratified the judgment passed by the American people and Congress, by replacing Admiral Arbuthnot in his command as soon as news of the March 16th battle reached London.

This affair was not appreciated at its true value in France. The battle was ignored, focusing only on the failure of the mission. Captain Des Touches, who had successfully commanded a division of seven ships against the enemy, was not appointed squadron leader. Instead of this reward, to which he believed he had the most just rights, he received a pension. The squadron's major, Lieutenant de Granchain, an officer of the greatest merit and with considerable seniority, was not made captain, although this rank had been requested for him with the most earnest entreaties by Mr. Des Touches.[1]

1. Captain Des Touches addressed the following letter to the minister: "I am very honored by the pension of eight hundred pounds that His Majesty has been kind enough to grant me, because it demonstrates the satisfaction He wishes to have with my services. But this type of reward was never the one I aspired to. I see my cadets in the navy on the eve of becoming general officers, and they do not have before them the title of having defeated His Majesty's enemies with forces that have proven to be very inferior and who owed the success of an orderly battle only to the superiority of their maneuvers. The recall of Arbuthnot proves it sufficiently, and I dare to say, My Lord, that the King's arms have acquired a new luster under my orders in the minds of all the English... Mr. de Granchain wrote equally to the minister. Here is a passage from his letter: "I was far from expecting that the response to the letters in which the battle of March 16 was reported would bring me only a special favor. This humiliation is all the more sensitive to me because I had conceived the most diametrically opposed hopes: moreover, I ask for no reparation. A late reward, which would be regarded as wrested by importunity, would not be compensation for me, and I only aspire to the moment when, having renounced all military honors, I will have nothing left to do but make vows as a good citizen, so that all the officers who, at different times, have been treated better than me, serve the King with as much zeal and, I dare add, as usefully as me.... “ The minister replied to M. de Granchain: “I had proposed to the King, sir, to grant you the rank of ship captain to take rank at the first promotion; but your letter of September 30 arrived very ill-timed for the dispatch of this pardon. His Majesty, noting the bitter and overly presumptuous tone of this letter, judged it appropriate to postpone the examination of your claims to another time, and I felt that this was not the moment to insist with Him for your advancement. I am angry that you have put this obstacle in the way of my good will for you. The minister gave this satisfaction to discipline, but he regretted having been mistaken. The following year, he named Lieutenant de Granchain ship captain. Mr. Des Touches' promotion to the rank of squadron leader took place in 1784.[234]

Squadron Commander de Barras, who, as we shall see later, came to take command of the naval division assembled at Rhode Island, considered it his duty to change the opinion that had been formed in Paris regarding the conduct of our squadron on March 16. He wrote to the Minister on September 30, 1781: "My Lord, I have seen with pain that in France, M. Des Touches's combat has not been given all the credit that it truly deserves and that has rightly been attributed to him in England. If, however, we compare it to the seven great naval battles of this war, we will see that there is none where our squadrons fought with forces as inferior as M. Des Touches's. The boldness of this commander in putting the *Romulus*, which he had just captured from the enemy, into line, and the firmness of the officer who held this perilous position, may have made the French line equal in number to that of the English, but they did not make the lines truly equal, and a simple glance at the list of the two squadrons is enough to see how much advantage the enemies had.

According to this well-established superiority, it was Admiral Arbuthnot, and not Mr. Des Touches, who should seek the decisive battle, and the English nation felt this so well that this admiral was mocked by the people of New York and recalled by the British ministry.[235]

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As for the advantage the English had in fulfilling their objective, it is a necessary consequence of their superiority, and, even more so, of their purely defensive position. It is a principle of war that one must risk a great deal to defend one's own positions, and very little to attack those of the enemy. Mr. Des Touches, whose objective was purely offensive, was able and had to, when the enemy opposed him with forces superior to his own, renounce a project that could no longer be successful unless he succeeded, against all probability, not only in defeating, but also in completely destroying this superior squadron. In this position, there was nothing left for him to do but to withdraw with honor, after having punished the arrogance of the enemy, and having established the reputation of French arms in the eyes of the people of America, so long deluded by the lying reports of the English. The voice of the entire navy, that of the Americans, who have paid the most honorable tributes to Mr. Des Touches, demand for this commander a more distinguished reward than a pension, given in part for previous injuries, and almost equal to those which have been granted to simple captains for having firmly kept their post in a line of battle. I dare to expect, Monseigneur, that after having acquired a more perfect knowledge of all the circumstances of the honorable combat sustained by Mr. Des Touches, you will feel all the merit of this action, and that you will believe yourself all the more obliged to reward him, that it will be due, in some way, compensation to Mr. Des Touches for the mortification which he feels, today, of not receiving any real mark of satisfaction, and of having no graces to announce to the officers of his squadron. Of all these favors, the one whose refusal was most sensitive to him was the request he made for the commission of ship captain for M. de Granchain, major of his squadron.[236]

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This promotion seemed so well-deserved that a large number of officers, upon hearing that replies had arrived to the letters announcing the battle of March 16, came in advance to offer their compliments to M. de Granchain, and I cannot describe to you their astonishment when they learned that he had received nothing more than a free pass. I am far from blaming the reward that was granted to M. de la Touche-Tréville, and which I myself requested; but it never entered my mind that it could be advanced to the detriment of M. de Granchain, and he himself found it hard to believe that this was the case. I ask you, with the utmost urgency, Monseigneur, to immediately repair an error that has cruelly and quite rightly wounded the sensibilities of this officer."

IV

Squadron Commander de Barras, successor to M. de Ternay, arrived in Rhode Island on May 10, 1781, aboard the *Concorde*. The son of General de Rochambeau, who had sailed on this frigate, brought his father instructions from our government. The Minister of War informed the general that the squadron, which had left Brest on March 22, 1781, to sail to the Caribbean Sea, under the command of the Count de Grasse, would arrive on the coasts of North America during the wintering season. He invited him to draw up, in concert with the American authorities, a campaign plan in which the navy could provide assistance. If our troops left the position they occupied, M. de Barras was to withdraw to Boston. By the *Concorde*, which had sailed for a few days with his squadron, the Count of Grasse had written to General de Rochambeau to ask him to notify him in advance of his intentions. Finally, he had given M. de Barras the order to send him avisos to Saint-Domingue with the dispatches of the general and the pilots.[237]

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Generals Washington and Rochambeau met on May 20 at Westerfield, near Hartford. During this meeting, they discussed the prospects of two equally important operations, namely an expedition to Virginia and an attack on New York. The first project, more specifically supported by Rochambeau, was provisionally adopted. The two generals agreed to march immediately and to effect their junction on the banks of the Hudson. It was there that they were to await letters from the Count de Grasse and make their final decisions. Fearing that our ships, deprived of support from land, would no longer be safe at Rhode Island, it had been decided that M. de Barras would go to Boston after the departure of the troops. General Washington had particularly insisted that the squadron depart. His opinion on this question was stated, as follows, in a note indicating the various points discussed at Westerfield: "The plan of campaign will require that the French army march north as soon as possible. Consequently, Count de Barras, according to the instructions given in this supposition, will prudently take advantage of the first favorable moment to go to Boston with the squadron he commands." Mr. de Barras did not attend the conference of May 20. Having been informed, at the moment when he was preparing to leave Rhode Island in company with General Rochambeau, that Admiral Graves had left New York, he had set sail, with all his ships, to ensure the return of a convoy. He learned, with deep regret, that the forces placed under his command, as a result of their distance, would be kept outside the operations that were being prepared. A council of war, convened at his request, declared that our ships could remain at Newport without inconvenience. Washington, informed by Mr. de Barras of the change made to the arrangements made on May 20, expressed the desire that this matter be submitted to a new deliberation.[238]

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Out of deference to the opinion of the American generalissimo, Messrs. de Rochambeau and de Barras convened a second council of war on June 8, which unanimously confirmed the previously expressed opinion. The navy and the army were represented in this council by ship captains Bernard de Marigny, Chadeau de la Clocheterie, Gardeur de Tilly, la Villebrune, de Médine, de Lombard, de la Grandière, and Des Touches; squadron leader de Barras; colonels de Laval, de Lauzun, and Custine; brigadiers de Béville and de Choisy; field marshals Baron de Vioménil, Count de Vioménil, and de Chastellux; and lieutenant general de Rochambeau. It is not only interesting, but also useful from a historical point of view, to recall the considerations invoked by our officers to justify their opinion. "The extreme desire," they said, "which animates all that composes the French forces to contribute equally and effectively to the good of the common cause, has given rise to new reflections. It was thought that the kind of retreat of the squadron in the port of Boston, while the land troops advanced on New York, could appear to the enemy as a contradictory step and weaken the effect that an offensive march by land was supposed to produce. According to these reflections, it was judged that the departure of the land troops having been decided by His Excellency, that of the squadron was only a simple precaution dictated by prudence. This precaution no longer being judged necessary by the King's navy, it itself desired not to be an obstacle to the general system of the campaign, to which it hopes to contribute by its stay in Newport, at this moment, and even more by the facility it will find to act more promptly, as soon as the help that one has reason to hope for has arrived." This passage, which we have quoted with intention, shows the zeal and goodwill displayed by the army and navy.[239]

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During this campaign, our officers had no other concern than to vigorously combat the enemies of France and America. Washington, upon learning of the decision taken by the second council of war, wrote on June 13 from his headquarters in New Windsor to the Count of Barras: "Sir, I had the honor of receiving yesterday Your Excellency's letter of the 9th instant, accompanied by the results of the second council of war. Having the greatest respect for the opinion of the gentlemen officers who composed it, I would have been satisfied even if they had simply stated that after a new examination they believed it would be in the common interest to persist in their initial determination. But in view of the new arguments that have been put forward in favor of the squadron's continued stay at Newport, to which are added those that Your Excellency expressed to me in your letter, I remain convinced that the decision that has been taken is excellent." I beg you to express my gratitude to the gentlemen of the navy for the reasons which make them personally wish to remain in the harbor of Newport rather than go to Boston." Some historians claim that Washington felt very dissatisfied when he learned that a question, resolved at Westerfield, had been put under deliberation in Rhode Island. The Count of Barras had seen things better when he wrote, about this incident, to Marshal de Castries: "The difference of opinion of General Washington seems to me to come more from an extreme delicacy which makes him fear compromising the forces of the King, than from a well-founded anxiety that he might have about the safety of the squadron." The letter from the American generalissimo, which we quoted above, is sufficient to reestablish the truth on this point. Washington brought, in public affairs, the same honesty as in private affairs. He would not have wanted to serve the interests of his country by compromising those of his allies.[240]

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The French government having outlined the course of action that Mr. de Barras was to follow in the event that Rochambeau's troops left Rhode Island, Washington insisted that the squadron proceed to the designated point, that is, Boston. When he learned that a council of war had recognized the appropriateness of deviating from the instructions of the Versailles cabinet, he went so far as to request that the adopted resolution be submitted for a new examination. The French officers having maintained their initial decision, his responsibility was completely absolved. He then expressed his true feelings by addressing his most sincere thanks to Mr. de Barras and the navy. We will see later the service that the vessels remaining in Rhode Island rendered to the allied army. The Concorde, which left Boston on June 20, 1781, with pilots for our ships and dispatches for the squadron's commander-in-chief, anchored on July 8 in the harbor of Cap Français. When the Count of Grasse, coming from Martinique, arrived in Saint-Domingue, he immediately knew the nature of the services expected of him. The letters he received from America presented the state of affairs in the most alarming light. Shortly before the Concorde's departure, General Clinton, who had received significant reinforcements from England, was in New York with 12,000 men, while the allies, encamped on the banks of the Hudson, had only 9,000 soldiers to oppose him. Lafayette's forces, charged with defending Virginia against Lord Cornwallis, were barely sufficient to hold the campaign.

1. The Duke of Lauzun said that he personally believed that the squadron should be based in Boston. However, his name appears at the bottom of the minutes of the council meeting of June 8, in which the contrary decision, taken unanimously for the first time on May 31, was confirmed under the same conditions. Since we are talking about the Duke of Lauzun, it is appropriate to recall that he showed himself, during this campaign, brave, active and devoted to the cause he had come to defend. He is not the only one, we must add, who, writing some time after the events and based on personal memories, was mistaken. In the memoirs relating to the American War of Independence, there are few facts relating to the navy that are accurately reported.[241]

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Generals Washington and Rochambeau, squadron leader de Barras, and M. de la Luzerne, our minister to Congress, urged the Count of Grasse to come to their aid with a large fleet, troops, and money. Among the vessels anchored in the harbor of the Cape, ten had long been in the Caribbean Sea. The minister had ordered them to be sent back to France, placing the merchant ships ready to put to sea under their escort. The Count of Grasse resolved to take them with him to the coasts of North America. While he could, by this means, have a large squadron, it was difficult for him to obtain troops and money. The governor of Saint-Domingue, M. de Lillancourt, who conducted himself in this circumstance with a devotion that cannot be praised enough, gave him 3,200 men, ten field guns, some siege guns and two mortars. Not wanting his march to be hampered by a convoy, the Count of Grasse had the men and equipment embarked on his ships. Having failed, despite his efforts, to resolve the question of money in Saint-Domingue, he sent the Aigrette to Havana. The captain of this vessel was to ask the governor of the colony to advance us 120,000 livres, a sum deemed necessary by General de Rochambeau to meet the needs of his army. On July 28, the Concorde set sail for Boston, a few days ahead of our squadron, which set sail on August 5. The Count of Grasse was joined by the Aigrette at the entrance to the Bahama Channel. When this frigate anchored in Havana, the state coffers were empty. However, thanks to the goodwill of the principal inhabitants, its captain put back to sea, six hours after his arrival, with the sum demanded by Rochambeau. Our fleet crossed the Bahama Channel, and anchored, on August 30, near Cape Henri, at the entrance to the Chesapeake.[242]

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In accordance with the agreements made at the Westerfield meeting, the French and Americans met at the end of July at Philippsburg, not far from New York. The dispositions made by the allies seemed to indicate an intention to attack the city. The commander-in-chief of the British army, General Clinton, allowing himself to be deceived by these demonstrations, kept with him the troops he intended to send to the southern provinces. He did more; he ordered Lord Cornwallis to approach Chesapeake Bay so that the general would be able to come to his aid by sea if circumstances later made it necessary. Such was the situation when the Concorde returned from Santo Domingo with the letters from the Count de Grasse. Certain of the fleet's imminent arrival, knowing that they could count on a reinforcement of more than three thousand soldiers, Washington and Rochambeau thought only of executing their skillfully prepared campaign plan. They set out as if they wanted to take new positions, without ceasing to have New York as their objective. A few days later, they abruptly turned their backs on that city and headed, by forced marches, towards the mouth of the Elk, located at the northern end of Chesapeake Bay.

The Count of Grasse had written to M. de Barras that he left him free to act as he saw fit, asking only to inform him of the party he felt it necessary to stop at. M. de Barras was convinced that Lieutenant General de Grasse, coming to the coasts of North America with twenty-eight vessels, had no need of his services. On the other hand, the crossing from Newport to the Chesapeake presented, in the present circumstances, serious difficulties. Our ships could find themselves caught between Graves' squadron, anchored at that moment in Gardner Bay, and Rodney's squadron, which was expected from the Antilles.[243]

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Consequently, he had thought of making for the island of Newfoundland, where the minister's instructions allowed him to make an expedition. Generals Washington and Rochambeau had been very strongly opposed to this project, and both had asked Count de Barras to go to Chesapeake Bay with the army's artillery and the few troops remaining at Rhode Island. "I am sorry," wrote Mr. de Barras to General de Rochambeau, "that the project I communicated to you should meet with such strong opposition from you. I believed it, and I believe it even more advantageous to the common cause, than a junction with Count de Grasse, regarded as useless by this general himself, who knows better than anyone the forces he must bring to this coast and those that Rodney is able to lead there. However, as your opinion and that of General Washington are absolutely opposed to mine on this project, I decide, at all events, to go to the Chesapeake with my squadron and to bring your artillery there, as you wish, and some transport vessels. I must repeat to you, however, that this meeting is hazardous, and I presume that Count de Grasse has felt the disadvantages, when he left me the freedom not to come and join him at the Chesapeake, if I judged it appropriate. Graves' squadron, such as it is, will certainly not stop me. But, according to what General Washington tells me, this admiral can be reinforced by Digby, and, according to general opinion, Rodney must come immediately to this coast. The encounter that I could have with one or the other of these squadrons, is not one of those chances against which there are a thousand to bet against one; it must be, on the contrary, the result of the combinations of the enemies who, when they know I am at sea, must turn all their sights and direct all their efforts to intercept my squadron and my convoy.[244]

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In any case, I do not hesitate to comply with your requisition and that of General Washington, and I will re-embark my artillery and yours to prepare to depart at the first favorable wind." Mr. de Barras had left New Port on August 25 with eight ships, four frigates, ten transports, and eight American boats. The role played by squadron leader de Barras during this campaign has not been precisely indicated. According to some, this general officer would have agreed, although he was Count de Grasse's superior, to leave the latter in command of the ships assembled in the Chesapeake. According to others, Mr. de Barras, who was Count de Grasse's subordinate, the latter having been appointed lieutenant general a few months earlier, had shown great self-sacrifice by placing himself, of his own accord and without being obliged to do so, under the orders of an officer who had entered the service after him. It was also said that it was very regrettable that precise instructions had not settled the reciprocal position of these two generals. These different assertions are erroneous. Messrs. de Barras and de Grasse were squadron leaders, and the former preceded the latter on the naval lists; but in appointing the Count de Grasse to the command of our naval forces in the Caribbean Sea, the government had given him a provisional commission as lieutenant general. He was therefore the hierarchical superior of all the squadron leaders, whatever their seniority. Moreover, he had the right to give orders to M. de Barras, as the following passage from a letter he wrote to him on July 28 proves. "I leave it to you, my dear Barras, to come and join me or to act on your side for the good of the common cause. Just let me know so that we do not harm each other unintentionally." M. de Barras had shown the excellent spirit that animated him by remaining in Rhode Island instead of retiring to Boston, as was desired in Paris. As for his junction with the Count of Grasse, we know that it had not been spontaneous. However, he had not resisted the entreaties of Washington and Rochambeau, and he had set sail, at their request, for the Chesapeake.[245]

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Lord Cornwallis, with all the forces at his disposal, occupied the city of York, on the right bank of the York River, as well as the city of Gloucester, located on the opposite bank. A naval division, composed of a fifty-man ship and several lower-ranked vessels, was anchored in the York River. The Marquis de la Fayette, posted a little beyond Williamsburg, with eighteen hundred good troops and some militia, was observing the movements of the English. One of his aides-de-camp, who had been waiting for the arrival of the squadron for several days at Cape Henri, informed the Count of Grasse that the allies would soon appear at the mouth of the Elk. Generals Washington and Rochambeau requested from the commander of the French fleet that their soldiers be transported by sea to the theater of operations. The expeditionary force, under the command of the Marquis de Saint-Simon, was sent to James Town, on the squadron's boats, although they had to travel more than twenty-five leagues to reach their destination. M. de Saint-Simon intended to meet at La Fayette, who had advanced as far as Williamsburg, when he learned of the entry of the French fleet into the Chesapeake. Ships were deployed in the James River to protect the passage of our canoes and prevent Cornwallis from crossing the river. A few ships took up position at the mouth of the York River to block the English division anchored between York and Gloucester. Seven vessels and a few frigates were ready to leave for the north of the bay, where these ships were to embark the small Franco-American army. The Count of Grasse intended to dispatch them as soon as his boats, aboard which were ninety officers and eighteen hundred sailors or soldiers, returned.[246]

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After our departure from Cap Français, Admiral Rodney, whose health was failing, returned to Europe. He left some of his ships in Jamaica, and sent the others to New York, under the command of Admiral Hood. Believing that most of Count de Grasse's ships had sailed for our ports, Admiral Rodney had no doubt that Great Britain's naval forces would be superior to ours, as soon as Admirals Hood and Graves had effected their junction. Sir Samuel Hood appeared off Sandy Hook on August 28, with fourteen ships and four frigates. He informed Rear-Admiral Graves that a French squadron had left Santo Domingo for the coast of North America. The same day, news was received in New York that M. de Barras had left Rhode Island with all his ships and transports. Rear Admiral Graves, who, by virtue of his seniority, had the command in chief, hastened to put to sea with the two squadrons. He forced sail in order to place himself between the Count of Grasse and M. de Barras, whom he hoped to fight separately. On September 5, at the opening of the Chesapeake, his surprise was extreme on sighting a large fleet at anchor near Cape Henry. On board the French vessels, it was believed for a moment that the ships in sight belonged to the squadron of M. de Barras, but the frigate of discovery having reported twenty vessels and seven frigates, it was no longer possible to doubt the presence of the enemy. The Count of Grasse immediately gave the signal to prepare to sail, and at noon, the tide being favorable, the army left the bay. She advanced towards the English, formed in ranks of speed, tacks to port, with a nice north-northeast breeze. We left, at the mouth of the James River, the *Experiment*, the *Triton*, the *Glorieux* and the *Vaillant*. In the afternoon, the two squadrons raced one after the other, arranged in the following order:[247]

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ESCADRE FRANÇAISE.

Ligne de bataille.

Noms des bâtiments.	Nombre de canons.	Noms des capitaines.
		Avant-garde.
Pluton	74	D'Albert de Rions.
Marseillais	74	De Castellane de Masjastre.
Bourgogne	74	De Charitte.
Réfléchi	74	Gillart de Suville.
Auguste	80	De Bougainville, chef d'escadre. Castellan.
Diadème	74	De Monteclerc.
Saint-Esprit	80	De Chabert.
Caton	74	De Framond.
		Corps de bataille.
César	74	Coriolis d'Espinouse.
Destin	74	Dumaitz de Goimpy.
Ville-de-Paris	104	De Grasse, lieutenant général. De Sainte-Césaire. De Vaugirault, major de l'armée.
Victoire	74	D'Albert Saint-Hyppolite.
Sceptre	80	De Vaudreuil.
Northumberland	74	De Briqueville.
Palmier	74	D'Arros d'Argelos.
Solitaire	64	De Cicé Champion.
		Arrière-garde.
Citoyen	74	D'Ethy.
Scipion	74	De Clavel.
Magnanime	74	Le Bègue.
Hercule	74	De Turpin de Breuil.
Languedoc	80	De Monteil, chef d'escadre. Duplessis Parscau.
Zélé	74	De Gras-Préville.
Hector	74	Renaud d'Aleins.
Souverain	74	De Glandevès.

ESCADRE ANGLAISE.

Ligne de bataille.

Noms des bâtiments.	Nombre de canons.	Noms des capitaines.
	Avant-garde.	
Shrewsbury	82	Robinson.
Intrepid	72	Molloy.
Alcide	82	Charles Thompson.
Princessa	82	Charles Knatchbull. Samuel Drake.
Ajax	82	Charrington.
Terrible	82	Finch.
Europa	72	Child.
	Corps de bataille.	
Montagu	82	Georges Boiven.
Royal Oak	82	Ardesoif.
London	108	Graves. Graves, contre-amiral.
Bedford	82	Graves.
Résolution	82	Robert Manners.
América	72	Samuel Thompson.
Centaur	82	John Inglefield.
	Arrière-garde.	
Monarch	82	Francis Reynolds.
Barfleur	100	John Knight. Sir Samuel Hood, contre-amiral.
Invincible	82	Saxton.
Belliquous	72	Brine.
Alfred	82	William Bague.
Adamant	60	Johnstone.
Solebay	72	

The English, who were arriving downwind, came to port in a successive movement, in order to position themselves on the same tack as us. The leaders of the line soon closed in, and a very lively fight ensued between the two vanguards. The wind dropped three-quarters before the English had completed their evolution, that is, before they were all drawn up on the closest line, their tacks to port. Those of the enemy vessels that were steering broad reach, held close to the wind in order to take the waters of their leader as soon as possible. The latter was forced, due to the change in the breeze, to come to starboard. The result of this state of affairs was that the rearguard and some ships of the main body remained out of range of the vessels corresponding to them in our fleet. The change that had occurred in the direction of the wind had put our ships in a checkerboard pattern. With the dual aim of reforming our line and preserving the vanguard from the danger of being cut off, the Count of Grasse signaled the leading ships to arrive from two quarters. While we were carrying out this maneuver, the English held the wind and the firing ceased. The *Auguste, Pluton, Marseillais, Bourgogne, Réfléchi, Diadème, Saint-Esprit, Caton, César, Destin, Ville-de-Paris, Victoire, Sceptre, Northumberland* and *Palmier* were the only ships that had taken part in this affair. From September 6 to 10, the French maneuvered to take away the advantage of the wind from the English. The poor running of some of our ships, which were not lined with copper, made the execution of this plan difficult. However, on the evening of the 10th, thanks to some variations in the breeze, the French found themselves to windward of the enemy, and the Count of Grasse was able to conceive the hope of delivering, the next day, a decisive battle. Several English vessels, notably the *Terrible, Montagu, Shrewsbury, Intrepid* and *Ajax*, had been badly treated on September 5. When night fell, Admiral Graves, shrinking from the consequences of a new fight, delivered the *Terrible* to the flames, which could not follow him, and he set sail for New York.[248]

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The next day, Count de Grasse, no longer seeing the enemy, feared that his adversary had headed for the Chesapeake, and he forced sail to reenter the bay. Two frigates, the *Isis* and the *Richmond*, detached by the English admiral to communicate with Cornwallis, were captured. In the evening, the squadron returned to the anchorage it had left six days earlier to meet the English. Count de Grasse was awaited with the greatest impatience by Generals La Fayelte and Saint-Simon, who had suspended all military operations during his absence. Our ships returned to their boats at Lynn Haven, after having very successfully completed their mission in the James River. Squadron Leader de Barras had entered the Chesapeake the previous night with all his ships. He had the good fortune not to be seen by Admiral Graves, although the latter had arrived in sight of Cape Henri five days before him. Had Lieutenant General de Grasse's crossing been prolonged, Mr. de Barras would have found the entrance to the Chesapeake guarded by twenty vessels. It must be recognized that the observations made by this squadron leader regarding the dangers of his mission were well-founded.

The *Romulus*, several frigates, and transport ships were dispatched to the northern part of the bay to embark the troops of Generals Washington and Rochambeau. The allies, having left the banks of the Hudson on August 19, arrived at the mouth of the Elk on September 7. Two thousand men took passage on local boats to go to the James River, and the army continued its march towards Annapolis, where it embarked, on the 18th, on the ships sent by the Count of Grasse. On September 26, all the maritime and military forces set in motion for this important expedition were assembled, and, on the 29th, the city of York was invested by land and sea.[249]

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The American historian Bancroft relates that, a few days after joining Lafayette at Williamsburg, Washington found himself faced with an unexpected difficulty. The Count of Grasse, learning that Admiral Graves had received reinforcements, expressed his intention to sail, leaving two vessels at the mouth of the York River. Washington wrote to him: "I would believe myself failing in my duty, not only to America, but also to France, if I did not urge you, with the strongest entreaties, to persevere in the execution of the plan that we have so happily prepared together." Lafayette carried the Generalissimo's letter aboard the *Ville-de-Paris*, and he personally made every effort to ensure that the Count of Grasse did not stray far from the Chesapeake. The commander of the French squadron, adds the American historian, agreed, but not without regret, to reverse his decision. This account, without being inaccurate, does not present the conduct of the Count of Grasse in its true light. This general officer had been warned that frigates, which had entered New York in the first days of September, announced the imminent arrival of a squadron from England, under the command of Admiral Digby. He had no doubt that Admiral Graves, knowing the dangers to which Cornwallis was exposed, would make a new attempt to rescue him. Fearing being surprised in a disadvantageous position, he had the idea, as his chief of staff says in his journal, "to save Admiral Graves half the journey." The principal officers of his squadron, whom he consulted before putting this plan into execution, were of the opinion that he should remain in the bay. They would not allow the English admiral to dare to attack us. The Count of Grasse, agreeing with their opinion, had his ships take up a position that would allow them to quickly advance to meet the enemy, if the latter were to be signaled.[250]

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He then had no other concern than to contribute, by all means in his power, to the army's operations. Bancroft says that Washington wrote to the commander-in-chief of the French fleet, when informed of his final decision: "A great character knows how to sacrifice his personal views to ensure important advantages for the public good."

Eight hundred men, taken aboard our ships, joined the Franco-American corps, charged, under the orders of Brigadier de Choisy, with blockading Gloucester. Lord Cornwallis found himself trapped in York Town with eight thousand soldiers, of whom about fifteen hundred were already in hospitals. He had little food, little ammunition, and the retreat of the British squadron left him no hope of rescue. The strength of the allied army, the artillery at its disposal and the situation of the place did not allow him to have any illusions about the fate that awaited him. He formed the plan to cross the York River and reach the countryside, after having overthrown the troops of M. de Choisy. A violent storm, which sank or dispersed the boats of his flotilla, at the moment when he was preparing to embark with all the men able to bear arms, forced him to abandon this attempt. During the night of October 14 to 15, two redoubts, which formed the main defense of the city outside, were taken, one by an American detachment, under the orders of La Fayette, the other by the French, commanded by M. de Vioménil. Unable to escape, nor to continue the fight, Cornwallis entered into negotiations for the surrender of the place. The day of October 18 was spent in negotiations between two officers of his army and the commissioners appointed by Generals Washington, Rochambeau and de Grasse. The Americans were represented by Colonel Laurens, the French troops by Colonel de Noailles, and the squadron by Lieutenant de Granchain, major of the squadron of M. de Barras. The capitulation was concluded the next day, on the conditions that Lord Cornwallis had imposed on the garrison of Charleston, when he had seized that city the previous year. There were in York Town a certain number of loyalists, that is to say, Americans devoted to the cause of England. Delivered to Washington's army, they would have been considered, not as prisoners of war, but as traitors.[251]

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In order to spare them the fate reserved for them, Cornwallis had insisted very strongly that the corvette *Bonnetta* be taken to New York unvisited. The Allied generals had accepted this condition, although they had easily discovered the secret motive behind this request. It had been agreed that the passengers of the *Bonnetta* could not serve in the current war until they had been duly exchanged. After completing its mission, this vessel was to return to the Chesapeake and be delivered to the Allies.

"General Cornwallis," says Captain de Vaugirault, major of the squadron, in his journal of the 1781 campaign, "surrendered himself a prisoner of war with six thousand English or German troops and fifteen hundred sailors. Twenty-two flags, one hundred and sixty cannons, seventy-five of which were cast iron, and eight mortars were found in the place. "A ship of forty-four and some transports had been set on fire by the fire of our batteries, or sunk by the English, but there remained about forty vessels, among which was a corvette, which were intact. In accordance with one of the articles of the capitulation, the naval equipment was delivered to the French navy and the sailors became prisoners of the squadron. In a letter which was made public, General Cornwallis was pleased to acknowledge the perfectly correct attitude of the Americans towards his army. But it was in the warmest terms that he spoke of the special attentions which he and his officers were the object of on the part of the French.[252]

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"Their generosity," he said, "their delicacy, the tact they bring to their dealings with us, are beyond all praise. I hope that the memory of their conduct will be present in the minds of the English officers whenever, as a result of the vagaries of war, a French officer falls into their hands."

Admiral Graves, having returned to New York on September 20, was joined at the beginning of October by six vessels. At a council of war, attended by the general officers of land and sea, it was decided that a new effort would be made to free Cornwallis. The squadron, on which General Clinton embarked with seven thousand men, set sail on October 19. The English, having learned of the capitulation of York Town as they approached the Chesapeake, returned to New York.

V

The news of this great event was greeted throughout America with a long cry of joy. Congress, expressing the population's feelings of gratitude, voted thanks to General de Rochambeau, "for the cordiality, zeal, talent, and courage with which he had advanced and supported the operations of the allied army against the British garrison of York."

Similar thanks were addressed to Count de Grasse for "the skill and valor he had displayed in attacking and defeating the British fleet off the Chesapeake, and for the zeal and ardor with which he, along with the naval force under his command, had provided the most effective and distinguished assistance and protection to the operations of the allied army in Virginia." A commemorative monument, erected in York Town, was to remind future generations of the disaster of Cornwallis's army and the part France had played in this glorious feat of arms. The Allied campaign in Virginia had a decisive influence on subsequent events.[253]

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The surrender of Burgoygne at Saratoga in October 1777 had instilled American courage and shown the British troops the worth of their adversaries. Nevertheless, shortly after this disaster, the English had repaired their losses and vigorously resumed the offensive. We have said that Washington, Rochambeau, M. de la Luzerne, and Squadron Leader de Barras, writing to the Count de Grasse in June 1781, painted the state of affairs in the darkest possible light. After the capture of York Town, things changed. The English people understood the futility of the sacrifices they were making to bring the North American colonies back under their control. The ministry, led by Lord North, was forced to withdraw. Finally, from that time on, military operations ceased on the American continent. General Clinton maintained garrisons in the cities of Savannah, Charleston, and New York, but he no longer dared to hold the campaign. The capitulation of Cornwallis is therefore the most significant military event that occurred during the struggle between Great Britain and its colonies. In the Virginia expedition, the importance of which should not be judged by the number of men involved, but by its results, France played a predominant role. We will show this in a few words, emphasizing in particular the role played by the navy. The squadron that left Brest on March 22, 1781, to go to the Antilles, had orders to come to the coasts of North America during the months of August, September, and October. The Count of Grasse wanted to be informed in advance of the services he could render with the forces placed under his command. On March 29, he wrote to squadron leader de Barras, who was going to Rhode Island with the *Concorde*, a letter in which he said: "I am sending you, Sir, a copy of the letter that I am writing to Count Rochambeau, concerning my stay on the coast of North America.[254]

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I ask you to contact this general and send me, by several avisos, good coastal pilots to Saint-Domingue, so that I can act immediately upon my arrival, without wasting time on preparations that are always detrimental to military operations. The letter that the Count of Grasse addressed to General Rochambeau read as follows: "His Majesty, Sir, has entrusted me with the command of the naval forces intended to protect his possessions in South America and those of his allies in North America. The forces that I command, Sir, are sufficient to fulfill the offensive plans that it is in the interest of the allied powers to carry out in order to achieve an honorable peace. But, I must have the honor of pointing out to you that, if the vessels are necessary for the execution of the plans that you may form, it would be useful to the service if MM. de Barras and Des Touches should be informed of this, so that the pilots we need could be sent to us. It seems to me, Sir, that it would be useful to the common cause if I were informed, in Saint-Domingue, where I will be at the end of June, of the enemy's position." It was therefore the foresight of the head of the French squadron that allowed Washington and Rochambeau to finalize, in good time, the plan for the Virginia expedition. Finally, if the Count of Grasse, upon receiving the proposals of the two generals in Saint-Domingue, had, as frequently happens in such cases, raised difficulties or requested some changes to the original plan, the allies would have been obliged to abandon this operation. Indeed, at the distance at which they were placed from each other, the negotiators would have had neither the time nor the possibility to agree. The Count of Grasse did not allow himself to be drawn into any criticism; He accepted, without discussion, the resolutions taken in the interview of May 20. He did more; concerned with the success of this expedition as if it had been his own, he obtained troops from the governor of Santo Domingo, and money from the inhabitants of Havana.[255]

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The *Concorde*, which he sent from Cap Français on July 28, brought the following letter to Mr. de Barras: "Upon my arrival at the Cape, I saw with great sorrow the distress in which the continent finds itself and the need for the prompt assistance requested by Count Rochambeau. I will leave on August 3 to go with all diligence to the Chesapeake Bay, a place which seems to me indicated, by you, my dear Barras, and by Messrs. Rochambeau, Washington and de la Luzerne, as the surest place to accomplish the good that is proposed."

The squadron, arriving first at the rendezvous, cut off all of Cornwallis's communications with the sea. Reinforced by the 3,200 men commanded by the Marquis de Saint-Simon, Lafayette was able to take up a defensive position at Williamsburg strong enough to prevent the English from withdrawing by that route. After defeating Admiral Graves, the Count of Grasse had most of Washington's and Rochambeau's soldiers transported from Annapolis to the banks of the James River. Eight thousand French and ten thousand Americans found themselves assembled before York Town.[1] Thus, under the conditions foreseen by the authors of the plan of campaign, the junction of the small army from the banks of the Hudson and the squadron coming from the Antilles with troops borrowed from the garrison of Saint-Domingue was effected. History offers few examples of a military operation that was better conceived and executed. In summary, the skill displayed by Washington, Rochambeau, and the Count de Grasse, and the perfect understanding that continued to reign between the officers of the two nations, were the causes of the Allies' success in Virginia. If July 4, 1776, is the official date, October 19, 1781, is the true date of the independence of the United States of America.

1. The ten thousand Americans included six thousand regular soldiers and four thousand militia men.[256]

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The Count of Grasse set sail on November 5, leaving only the *Romulus* and two frigates on the shores of North America. The ships *Victoire, Vaillant, Provence,* and *Triton*, and the frigates *Gentille* and *Railleuse* were sent to Saint-Domingue, with orders to bring a merchant fleet back to Europe.

VI

In the first days of November 1781, the Governor General of the Windward Islands learned that the garrison of Saint-Eustache was guarding itself very negligently. The governor of this colony seemed convinced that he had nothing to fear from the French during the absence of the Count of Grasse. M. de Bouillé resolved to take advantage of this imprudent confidence to seize the island by surprise. He spread the rumor that he intended to go out to meet the squadron expected off the coast of America. Twelve hundred men were embarked on the frigates *Amazone, Galathée*, the corvette *Aigle* and some local boats. This division set sail on November 16, but was hampered by the weather, and it was only on the night of the 25th that it reached Saint Eustatius. The sea was rough, and most of the boats in which our troops embarked were broken upon reaching the beach. Around three o'clock in the morning, four hundred men were ashore and all communication with the open sea had become impossible. This situation, however critical it was, was not beyond the calm courage and resourcefulness that distinguished the Marquis de Bouillé. He marched on the town, two leagues from the point where the landing had taken place. At six o'clock in the morning, the French emerged near an esplanade on which part of the garrison was exercising. Not far from there were the barracks, and a fort which constituted the main defense of the place.[257]

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Deceived by the red uniform of the Irish chasseurs at the head of the French column, the English soldiers allowed us to approach without suspicion. They were only awakened from their error by receiving a point-blank volley of musketry. Seized by panic, they fled in the greatest disorder. The governor was returning to the city after a horseback ride when he was surrounded and taken prisoner. Two hundred men, commanded by the Count of Dillon, went straight to the barracks, while one hundred men, under the orders of Major de Frène, headed for the fort. Major de Frène and his detachment acted with such diligence that they entered the fort on the heels of the English. They rendered useless the efforts of some officers to close the drawbridge. At this early hour, the men who were not present at the exercise were scattered throughout the barracks and the town. They were taken prisoner before they had time to assemble. This bold raid delivered the seven hundred men who made up the garrison to the Marquis de Bouillé's small force. After the victory, the general conducted himself with typical French generosity. He distributed to the inhabitants the booty that Admiral Rodney and General Vaughan had left on the island. Finally, he returned to the governor, with the consent of all the officers, a very large sum, which the latter affirmed, on his honor, to be his personal property.

The islands of Saint Martin and Saba were recaptured by a detachment sent from Saint Eustatius. After garrisoning the conquered islands, the Marquis de Bouillé returned to Martinique. There he found the squadron of the Count of Grasse, which had anchored on November 26 in Fort Royal Bay.

At the beginning of 1781, we took part in an expedition against the English settlements in Florida.[258]

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A division, placed under the command of Squadron Leader de Monteil, and the Spanish squadron commanded by Don Solano, were about to set sail from Havana for Santo Domingo, when, on April 8, a rumor spread that seven large vessels had been seen off Cape Saint Antoine. The Captain General of the island of Cuba believed that English forces were being sent to the aid of Pensacola, which was under attack by Don Galvez, Governor of Louisiana. He suspended Don Solano's departure for Santo Domingo, and, a few days later, sent him orders to sail for the Gulf of Mexico. Yielding to the very pressing requests of the Spanish admiral, M. de Monteil decided to accompany him with the ships *Palmier, Destin, Intrépide, Triton,* and the frigate *Andromaque*. The English had not appeared on the coast; but the presence of the combined squadron allowed Don Calvez to push the siege operations vigorously. Sailors and soldiers belonging to both squadrons were placed at his disposal. On the 9th, General Campbell, who commanded in Pensacola, was forced to capitulate. The garrison, fourteen hundred strong, was to be transported to one of the ports of Great Britain located outside the Caribbean Sea, on the condition that it not be used against Spain or its allies before having been duly exchanged. The capture of Pensacola gave Spain full possession of West Florida. Following this affair, M. de Monteil wrote to the minister: "The Spanish general spoke highly of the conduct of the French gunners, whether from Brest or the detachment of the royal corps from Saint-Domingue, the Agenois chasseurs and all other portions of troops that I was able to put ashore, and finally the land and sea officers who commanded the troops and sailors who landed." He added that the greatest harmony had continued to reign between the officers of the two nations.[259]

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BOOK IX

Events in Europe during the course of 1781. - A squadron under the command of Admiral Darby resupplies the town of Gibraltar. - Squadron Leader de Lamotte-Picquet captures the convoy from Saint-Eustache. - Battle of Dogger Bank between the English and the Dutch. - Cruise of the Franco-Spanish fleet under the command of Don Luis de Cordova. - Landing of the Spanish at Minorca. Capture of Mahon. - The Duke of Crillon besieges Fort Saint-Philippe. - A French auxiliary corps under the command of Baron de Falkenhayn joins the Spanish troops. - Sortie of General de Guichen with reinforcements sent to the Antilles and India. - The convoy sailing under the escort of this general officer is surprised by Rear Admiral Kempenfeldt.

I

France did not have sufficient forces to play an important role in the Antilles, on the coasts of North America, in Asia, and in the seas of Europe. The Versailles cabinet drew the attention of Holland and Spain to the need to assemble at Brest a fleet strong enough to hold off the ships Great Britain retained in the Channel. The Dutch remained in the Texel, and the Spanish did not leave Cadiz. As a result, the English blockaded, with forty ships, seventy vessels belonging to the allied powers.

Events showed the court of Madrid the extent of the error it had committed in rejecting our proposals. Since February 1780, the fortress of Gibraltar had received no relief.[260]

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At the beginning of 1781, the supplies brought by Admiral Rodney were almost completely consumed. This situation, which was well known in England, was of great concern to public opinion. Admiral Darby, at the head of a fleet of twenty-eight vessels, set sail from Portsmouth on March 13. After cruising for a few days along the Irish coast to rendezvous with the transports expected from Cork, he headed for the strait. Three hundred merchant ships put out to sea under the protection of his squadron. Five vessels and a convoy of thirty sailboats carrying supplies, munitions, and three thousand soldiers sailed with the English army as far as Cape Finisterre. Commodore Johnstone, at the head of this squadron, and General Meadows, who commanded the troops, were heading for India with orders to seize the Cape of Good Hope.

The Spanish were at sea when they were informed of Admiral Darby's departure. A neutral ship, with which they communicated, informed them that it was only a few days ahead of the British squadron. Whether he had secret orders from his government, or whether he considered his defeat certain in advance if he attempted to confront the English, Lieutenant General Don Luis de Cordova brought his fleet back to port. Admiral Darby wanted to be informed of the enemy's position before entering the strait. Surprised not to encounter him in the vicinity of Cape Saint Vincent, he continued his route towards Cadiz. Arriving off the coast of this city, he became certain that the entire Spanish squadron was in the harbor. He immediately signaled Rear Admiral Sir John Lockhart Ross to sail for Gibraltar with his division and the convoy. As for him, after having entrusted some of his frigates with the mission of monitoring the movements of the Spanish squadron, he placed himself with the bulk of his forces between Cadiz and the strait.[261]

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The English ships, having been caught in the calm at the mouth of the Bay of Gibraltar, were attacked with great vigor by a division of gunboats and bombards commanded by Rear Admiral Moreno. The breeze having risen, the gunboats hastened to approach the coast, and the English reached the anchorage. The operation of resupplying the fortress encountered no further obstacles. On April 20, Sir John Lockhart Ross left the bay to join the English squadron waiting for him outside the strait. As soon as all his ships were reunited, Admiral Darby set sail for England.

The events that had transpired at Saint Eustatius had been promptly informed in Paris. The minister knew the probable time of departure of the ships carrying the remains of the island's inhabitants to England. Finally, we knew that the escort, placed under the command of Commodore Hotham, was four ships strong. The minister was very keen to make a capture of this importance, but he feared that the squadron sent to capture the convoy from Saint Eustatius would itself be intercepted by Admiral Darby. The latter, according to the knowledge we had of his movements, was due to appear on the English coast at the same time as Commodore Hotham. Marshal de Castries was in this frame of mind when he received from the squadron leader de Lamotte-Picquet a letter which applied very precisely to the situation. This general officer was at Brest, where he was supervising the armament of six ships under his command. "I have conferred," he said to the minister, "with Mr. Hector[1] on the object of my destination. It seems to me that it is for Cadiz. I will admit to you, Monsignor, that I would prefer a cruise between the Isles of Scilly and the Azores. I think it would be more detrimental to the enemy than my stay in a Spanish harbor.

1. Squadron Leader and Naval Commander at the Port of Brest.[262]

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In any case, you can count on all my zeal and activity: I have never been so eager to do good, and I hope to find the opportunity." It was known at that moment that several convoys, including a very considerable one, coming from Jamaica, were expected in England. Lamotte-Picquet rightly assumed that Marshal de Castries was concerned about the dangers facing a squadron sent on a cruise, at the time when Admiral Darby was returning, with twenty-six ships, from the Strait towards the English Channel. He wrote to him on April 18: "Will I be permitted to deduce to you here the reasons which make me wish to leave at this moment when the enemy fleets are ready to return? There is no reason to fear that a squadron of six good ships and a few frigates could be intercepted." There has never been an example of this, and the precautions that continual experience must suggest to me will protect me from such a misfortune. It is not possible, moreover, that I will not seize some fleet; the way in which they are convoyed leaves no room for doubt. If, all year round, we had a squadron of eight ships cruising, few enemy vessels would reach their destination. The surest way, in my opinion, to defeat the English is to attack their commerce." After receiving these two letters, the minister was able to confidently give an order that Lamotte-Picquet was only too happy to execute. The latter put to sea on April 25, with the ships *Invincible* of one hundred and ten guns, *Bien-Aimé* and *Actif* of seventy-four, *Alexandre, Hardi* and *Lion* of sixty-four, the frigates *Néréide* and *Sybille*, the cutters *Chasseur* and *Levrette*. It was spread that he was going to Ferrol, where he was to effect his junction with a Spanish division. After a few days of cruising, he had the good fortune to sight the convoy of Saint-Eustache. The ships managed to escape, but, out of thirty merchant ships, twenty-two were captured. At the moment when we executed this fortunate coup, Admiral Darby was approaching the coast of England.[263]

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Warned of this event by a neutral vessel, he detached eight vessels in pursuit of Lamotte Picquet. The general officer to whom he entrusted command made a strong sail in order to arrive at the entrance to the Iroise River before the French. On the morning of May 24, the English gave chase to a large ship, in which they quickly recognized a vessel. It was the *Actif*, of seventy-four, commanded by M. de Boades, which had separated from Lamotte-Picquet the previous night. This vessel was joined in the evening by the *Non Such*, of seventy-four, with which it had a very lively engagement. The action, interrupted by nightfall, resumed the next day at six o'clock in the morning. The English vessel, having sustained some damage, moved away. The captain of the *Actif*, fearing to be overtaken by the ships of the squadron to which his adversary belonged, continued his route to Brest, where he anchored the same day. Lamotte-Picquet was in the harbor with his ships and prizes. Thus was completed what the Marquis de Bouillé had so well begun. Most of the wealth acquired by the odious means we have described was lost to England.

II

Since the time of its break with Great Britain, Holland had rendered no other service to the common cause than to force the English to keep a few ships in the North Sea. A small squadron, placed under the command of Admiral Parker, had been given the mission of intercepting warships attempting to reach the ports of France or Spain.

1. M. de Boades was rewarded for his conduct in this affair. He had been wounded during the action.[264]

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During the month of June 1781, this admiral was tasked with leading a convoy into the Baltic. His squadron, which consisted of five ships and two frigates, was joined, a few days after its departure, by two ships, one of seventy-four and one of forty-four. The Dutch armaments had moved with a slowness that one might have thought calculated. However, in the month of July 1781, Admiral Zoutman put to sea with seven ships. On August 5 at daybreak, he had arrived off the Dogger Bank, when his frigates signaled Parker's squadron. This admiral was returning from the Baltic escorting a merchant fleet. After signaling the convoy's ships to keep close to the wind, he allowed the Dutch squadron to approach. The latter, without showing any hesitation in its maneuver, formed the line of battle by reducing sail. Admirals Parker and Zoutman seemed to agree to engage only in a decisive affair. Not a cannon shot was fired until the two flagships, the *Admiral de Ruyter* and the *Fortitude*, were abeam of each other and within pistol range. At that moment the action began along the whole line with extreme vivacity. The two squadrons were placed in the following order:[265]

ESCADRE HOLLANDAISE.

Noms des bâtiments.	Nombre de canons.	Noms des capitaines.
Le Prince héréditaire...	54	Van Braack.
L'Amiral général..	76	Van Rinsbergen.
L'Argo.....	44	Staring.
Le Batave	54	Le baron de Bentinck.
L'Amiral de Ruyter	68	Zoutman, amiral. Staring.
L'Amiral Piet Hein	54	Van Braam.
La Hollande.....	68	Dédel.

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ESCADRE ANGLAISE.

Noms des bâtiments.	Nombre de canons.	Noms des capitaines.
Le Bienfaisant.....	64	Braithwaite.
Le Berwick.....	74	Fergusson.
Le Preston.....	50	Groeme.
La Fortitude...	74	Hyde Parker Robertson.
L'Artois.....	40	Mac Bride.
Le Dolphin.....	44	Blair.
La Princesse Amélia.. ..	80	Macartney.
Le Buffalo.....	60	Truscot.

The English and Dutch ships, arranged in two parallel lines, cannonaded each other without any attempt on either side to maneuver. After three hours and forty minutes of heavy firing, the combat ceased due to the disorder and the distance between the two squadrons. The efforts made by Admirals Zoutman and Parker to reform their lines were in vain. The ships were unable to steer and neither of them managed to resume their station. Admiral Zoutman headed for the Texel, while his adversary rallied to the English coast. The ship *Hollande*, of sixty-eight, sank the next day, and the boats of the squadron only had time to save the crew. The losses amounted, on each side, to about five hundred men killed or wounded. Of all the battles fought during this war, that of the Dogger Banck, if we consider the number of ships engaged, was the most deadly. This affair had taken on a particularly fierce character due to the circumstances. The Dutch had greeted with joy, on the morning of August 5, the sight of Admiral Parker's ships.[266]

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Fighting the English with equal strength was truly a stroke of luck for them, who had no navy. Emerging victorious from this encounter was the thought that seized Admiral Zoutman, his officers, and his crews. To achieve this result, the Dutch ships fought until their forces were completely exhausted. Less skilled than the English, firing less quickly and less effectively, they displayed a stubbornness that never wavered for a moment. Surprised at the start of the action by the attitude of their adversaries, the English redoubled their ardor to triumph over a resistance they had not expected. Imbued with a sense of their superiority, they did not accept that they could be defeated. When the British squadron ceased its fire, the separation of the two lines rendered it useless. The dilapidated condition of his ships prevented Admiral Parker from pursuing the enemy. Holland enthusiastically welcomed the news of the Battle of the Dogger Bank. The valour of Admiral Zoutman's sailors reawakened memories of the fierce battles fought by the Ruyters and Tromps against the fleets of Great Britain during the previous century. The Republic showed gratitude to those of its descendants who had worthily upheld the ancient honor of the Dutch flag. Admiral Zoutman and several of his captains were promoted to higher ranks. Numerous awards were bestowed on the staffs and crews.

The British squadron was treated no less favorably. The King came to Portsmouth to review the ships that had participated in the Battle of the Dogger Bank. The nation paid tribute to the conduct of Admiral Parker and his comrades-in-arms, but it showed extreme irritation with the First Lord of the Admiralty. The latter, it was said, could not be unaware of the number of ships anchored in the Texel, and he had failed in his duty by not giving the English admiral sufficient forces to defeat the enemy. A decisive victory over Zoutman's squadron would have obliged the States-General to ask for peace.[267]

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Even if this hypothesis had not materialized, the destruction of the Dutch naval forces would have freed English trade from all fear. Admiral Parker did not forgive his government for depriving him of a resounding triumph by not increasing his squadron by a few ships. Despite the entreaties made to him, he resigned his command.[1]

III

Spain had deeply resented the failure that Admiral Darby had inflicted on Cordova's fleet by resupplying Gibraltar. She sought revenge by leading an expedition against Minorca. Since the beginning of the war, this island had been a meeting place for numerous privateers who caused considerable damage to our trade and that of our allies. The French government showed itself willing to support an enterprise whose aim was to deprive the English of an advantageous position in the Mediterranean. It did not appear that this operation would present any serious difficulties. Great Britain, forced to defend itself in Asia, Europe, and America, had only a small number of soldiers at its disposal. The troops occupying the island, under the command of Generals Murray and Draper, did not exceed three thousand men. The English had made Fort Saint-Philippe a prime position. They could, as they had done a few months earlier, appear unexpectedly at the entrance to the strait and dispatch a convoy that would have landed troops, supplies, and equipment under the guns of this fortress.

1. "I wish Your Majesty," the old admiral said to the King, "younger officers and stronger ships." Most of the vessels in his squadron, and especially the one on which he had his flag, were old ships, deemed unsuitable for a long-distance campaign.[268]

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The court of Madrid, fearing this possibility, requested that the French vessels anchored in Brest harbor be sent to Cadiz. Nineteen vessels, under the command of Lieutenant General de Guichen, joined forces with Cordova's squadron on July 6. On the 23rd, the Franco-Spanish fleet, numbering forty-nine vessels, set sail. It accompanied the warships and transports bound for Minorca as far as the Mediterranean. When Lieutenant General Don Luis de Cordova no longer had any fears for their safety, he recrossed the strait, and the combined army sailed north.

The Duke of Crillon had been appointed by the court of Madrid as commander-in-chief of the expedition. The troops, numbering eleven thousand men, were embarked on eighty-five transport vessels. The escort, placed under the command of Rear Admiral Don Buonaventura Moreno, was composed of twenty vessels of all ranks. The army landed on August 9, 1781, in the north of Minorca, and proceeded by forced marches to the island's capital. The detachments holding the countryside fell back before the Spanish, but the Duke of Crillon acted with such diligence that he entered Mahon following the English. The city, the arsenal, and the port fell into his power without a fight. General Murray had not had time to destroy the weapons, food, munitions, and considerable equipment contained in the arsenal. The victors found stores filled with goods taken from the merchant navies of France and England.

1. Judging by a note written by an officer belonging to the Duke of Crillon's staff, our allies would have found real riches in the city, arsenal, and port of Mahon. This note, written in French, reads as follows: "A very large arsenal, with a warehouse of timber, masts of the first size, sails, and ropes suitable for equipping first-rate vessels, and in sufficient quantity to arm two squadrons, or, according to Don Moreno's expression, much more than there are in the three departments of Cadiz, Cartagena, and Ferrol; one hundred and sixty bronze and iron cannons, from four to twelve pounds of shot; twenty-five thousand strong piastres; a plan drawn up by an engineer for mines and other defense projects." two large stores filled with wheat and two others filled with other grains, pork and salted beef and several other provisions; three frigates and four chebecks ready to set sail and armed for racing; about twenty large vessels; a considerable store of effects of all kinds, taken by the Mahon corsairs and purchased from them by the King of England. M. de Crillon values it almost as much as the arsenal and considers this prize as important as that of the English at Saint-Eustache. In the governor's house was found the model of a three-decked ship in silver, with its gold cannons, which the governor intended to present to his master. M. de Crillon has just sent it, by one of his aides-de-camp, to the *Princess of Asturias*. The officers are busy continuing the inventory of the effects that are being discovered at every moment and which are said to be of great value. We are masters of the port and have seized several Barbary ships laden with meat and other provisions. Headquarters are established at Mahon, where M. de Crillon has received the oath of allegiance from the inhabitants. This general has published an ordinance by which he informs all these islanders that they will be treated as Spaniards. This publication was made to the sound of bells and repeated acclamations of: "Long live the King of Spain!" M. de Crillon treated the principal inhabitants of the island at his home, and he admitted to his table five English officers who were taken prisoner along with 150 men.

This general has reconnoitered Fort Saint-Philippe, whose garrison is composed of 2,500 men: two Hanoverian battalions, one English battalion, and 400 sailors. He found the place well fortified, but he does not believe it to be impregnable; he is asking the King for 8 to 10,000 infantry, 600 dragoons, and 200 artillerymen.

We learn from Hanoverian deserters that the fort of Saint-Philippe is short of wine, wood and coal.[269]

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The Spanish army laid siege to Fort Saint-Philippe, to which the British troops had withdrawn. The Duke of Crillon was joined shortly after by a force of four thousand French soldiers, commanded by Field Marshal Falkenhayn.

When the Franco-Spanish fleet rounded Cape Saint Vincent, it remained fifty leagues offshore so as not to be seen by neutral vessels sailing along the Spanish coast. The commander-in-chief hoped to surprise the English in the Bay of Biscay, but he arrived off Brest without having sighted the enemy.[270]

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The court in London was completely unaware of our movements. When Admiral Darby, who was in the Channel with twenty ships, learned of the arrival of the Franco-Spanish fleet, he anchored at Torbay to await reinforcements. The alarm our presence caused on the southern coasts of England was not long-lasting. After a short cruise, Cordova, in compliance with his government's orders, returned to the entrance of the Iroise. On September 5, he signaled to Lieutenant General de Guichen that he was free to enter Brest, and he set sail for Cadiz. Nine French vessels, including five three-deckers, all copper-clad, accompanied the Spanish squadron.

The campaign the combined fleet had just undertaken was likely to undermine the reputation of France and Spain. These two powers had made a large deployment of forces that had achieved no results. Not only had we gained no advantage over the enemy, but we had not remained at sea long enough, either to intercept the convoys expected in England or to ensure the return of our own.[1] Announcing his arrival in Brest with ten ships, Lieutenant General de Guichen wrote to the minister: "The campaign was not brilliant[2] enough to allow me to ask you for favors for the commanders and officers of the squadron, but I must nevertheless report to you that I was very satisfied with the attention that the captains paid to their maneuvers and the execution of the signals."

1. I am very touched, Monseigneur, that Mr. de Cordova did not comply with my requests to extend the cruise, which could have been favorable to the return of the convoy we are expecting from Saint-Domingue. (Letter from Lieutenant General de Guichen to the minister.)

2. In another letter he said: "Monseigneur, I have returned from a tiring campaign, but not a glorious one.[271]

Squadron Commander de Lamotte-Picquet had fallen ill during the combined fleet's crossing from Cadiz to the English Channel. On August 21, he informed the minister that his health required his return to France. He concluded the letter he wrote to him on this subject by saying: "I could not be more satisfied with my officers; M. de la Voyrie, my flag captain, is fit to lead a squadron. I take the liberty of asking you for command of a ship for him. As for me, I will always be sufficiently rewarded if I can do something for the honor of the flag. I am not asking you for command of an fleet. When I am well again, seven or eight good ships will be enough for me. With that, I do not fear all the naval forces of England. Please, Monseigneur, bear in mind that I have little time left to serve, and deign to put me in a position to take advantage of it." Lamotte-Picquet, as he wrote to the minister, commanded the ninth division of Cordova's fleet. This situation could not suit a man of his valour and character.

The retreat of the combined fleet allowed Great Britain to dispose of part of the forces it had retained in the Channel. There was reason to believe that it would take advantage of this circumstance to send ships to the two points where we were fighting energetically against it, that is to say, in the Antilles and in Asia. The situation of the Count of Grasse particularly attracted the attention of the French government. This general officer had received neither reinforcements nor supplies since he left Brest. On the other hand, he was obliged, according to his instructions, to return to Europe the ships that had left our ports since the beginning of the year 1780.

1. At that time, he had forty-seven years of service, thirty distant campaigns, twelve combats, and six wounds. Lamotte-Picquet was surprised, not without reason, not to be appointed lieutenant general. (He wrote to the minister, who obviously agreed with him, since he appointed him to this rank a few months later.)[272]

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The minister prescribed the necessary measures to dispatch ships and a convoy carrying men, supplies, and equipment to Martinique. The demands we had to meet were so numerous, given the limited extent of our resources, that the vessels designated for this service were not ready until the first days of December. On the 10th of that month, seven vessels, five of which were going to Martinique and two to the Isle of France, put to sea, under the command of Lieutenant General de Guichen. After escorting all these vessels out to sea, this general officer was ordered to head for Cadiz with the twelve vessels under his command. Before entering this port, he was to detach Lamotte-Picquet with two vessels to meet a convoy coming from Saint-Domingue.[1] The English government, informed of our preparations, had sent Admiral Kempenfeldt on a cruise in the Bay of Biscay. Assuming that the reinforcements sent to our outstations would not be accompanied by considerable forces, the British Admiralty had given it only thirteen vessels. On December 12, the French squadron was about fifty leagues west-southwest of Ushant. It was heading west with a fresh southeast breeze; the sea was rough and the weather overcast and squally. In the afternoon, the warships, through extremely unfortunate negligence, were ahead and to leeward of the convoy, when, suddenly, in a clearing, Admiral Kempenfeldt's ships were sighted to windward of our ships. The latter, judging the situation with a very sure glance, steered the convoy. He had understood very well that he might capture part of our transports before the ships were in a position to rescue them.

1. When the instructions ordering departure arrived in Brest, Lamotte-Picquet, who commanded a division of this squadron, was suffering greatly from a violent attack of gout. He sent word to Guichen that he would be taken on board. (Letter from Guichen to the minister.)[273]

The convoy's ships gave chase, scattering in all directions, but twenty of them fell into enemy hands. The French squadron watched helplessly as this sudden attack unfolded; formed in line of battle, it strove to get upwind. Two ships, the *Actif* and the *Triomphant*, were the only ones to exchange cannonballs with the English.[1] Night, which fell very quickly, hid the enemy's movements from us. Admiral Kempenfeldt rallied his ships and established himself on the same side as our squadron. The next day at daybreak, having recognized our superiority, he took advantage of his windward position to move away. He returned to England with his prizes, on board which were about a thousand soldier passengers and considerable equipment. A few days later, the squadron was assailed by a very violent gale. Several ships, including the *Bretagne* and the *Couronne*, which Guichen and Lamotte-Picquet were aboard, lost part of their masts.[2]

1. Captain Macarty of the *Actif* had shown great vigor and resolve by bombarding the leader of the English squadron. (Letter from Squadron Leader de Vaudreuil to the Minister.)

2. Upon his arrival in Brest, Squadron Leader de Lamotte-Picquet wrote to the Minister to recommend some of his crew who had been injured in the dismantling of his ship. We borrow from this letter the following passage which is of real interest, in that it gives an idea of the relations existing, at that time, between the crews and their leaders: "I enclose here, Monseigneur, the list of the men of my crew who were injured in the dismasting of December 22, 1781. I must point out to you that it is always the best sailors to whom these kinds of accidents happen. This class of men is in great need of encouragement and rewards. I have the honor of recommending these to your kindness and generosity, especially my master sailmaker who, for more than twenty years, has embarked with me in the said capacity. - He is a subject of the greatest distinction in his state and who alone supported a wife and children who will fall into misery, if you do not have the kindness to come to their aid; To add insult to injury, the poor wretch had no share of the prizes I took; he was then on board the *Zodiaque*."

The master sailmaker, Mathias Respigel, died of his injuries. The minister granted a pension to his widow and a gratuity to the sailors who had been injured in the dismasting of the Couronne.

Thanking the minister, Lamotte-Picquet added: "It remains for me to reward the man named Laurent Demas, my first master, and you were kind enough to assure me that he would not be forgotten." - This master had just distinguished himself in a northerly gale, caught aboard the *Robuste* in February 1782.[274]

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The *Triomphant*, on which Squadron Leader de Vaudreuil had his flag, the *Brave*, and a few transports were the only ships able to continue their journey. All the other ships in the squadron and convoy returned to our ports.

If there is one example that demonstrates the imperative need to observe, in all circumstances, the precautions prescribed by the regulations, it is the event we have just reported. The negligence of Lieutenant General de Guichen, who was ahead and to leeward of his convoy, had cost us twenty transport vessels. Upon arriving in Brest, this general officer, moved by a feeling that cannot be overestimated, wanted to resign his command. This decision seemed to him the natural consequence of the mistake he had made. The government, remembering his services, and especially the three battles he had fought in the Antilles against Admiral Rodney at the beginning of 1780, kept him at the head of his squadron.[275]

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BOOK X

The French attack Saint Kitts. - Admiral Hood attempts to send relief to the island. - Engagement between the English and French squadrons. - Admiral Hood anchors in the harbor of Basse-Terre. - Capitulation of Brimstone Hill. - The English squadron escapes during the night. - Surrender of the islands of Saint Kitts, Nieves, and Montserrat. - Return of the French squadron to Martinique. - Preparations made by France and Spain for the conquest of Jamaica. - Arrival of Rodney. - Concentration of English forces at Saint Lucia. - Sail of the two squadrons. - Engagement of April 9. - Battle of Dominica. - The French lose five vessels. - Discussion regarding the event of April 12. - Judgment rendered by the court martial convened in Lorient to judge the conduct of the general officers and captains under the command of the Count of Grasse. - Arrival of the French squadron in Saint-Domingue.

I

On January 5, the Count of Grasse headed for Saint-Christophe with twenty-six vessels. On the 11th, he anchored in Salines Bay, a little south of the town of Basse-Terre, on the west coast of the island. The military commander, General Frazer, having withdrawn to the fortified position of Brimstone Hill, the expeditionary force landed without encountering any resistance. The exactions committed in Saint Eustatius had caused considerable losses to the trade of Saint Kitts.[1]

1. The indignation aroused in Saint Kitts by the conduct of Rodney and Vaughan had been such that the Solicitor General of the Crown himself had drafted the memorial that the inhabitants had sent to London to complain of the exactions of which they had been victims. Goods belonging to them and which were in Saint Eustatius had been declared safe havens.[276]

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On the other hand, certain legislative measures recently adopted by the British Parliament had harmed the interests of the colonists. The latter determined to remain aloof from the quarrel dividing the governments of France and England. They sent a deputation to the Count of Grasse to assure him that no hostile act would be committed against us. The redoubt in which the garrison had taken refuge was established on a hill several hundred meters high. The Marquis de Bouillé, having recognized the impossibility of capturing it by a main attack, made arrangements to lay siege to it.

Admiral Hood had learned in Barbados of our departure from Martinique and the purpose of our expedition. Although the forces at his disposal were inferior to ours, he did not hesitate to set sail. After touching at Antigua to pick up General Prescot and some troops, he headed for Saint-Christophe. On the 24th, our frigates reported twenty-two English vessels near the island of Nièves. The Count of Grasse set sail with all the more eagerness as the presence of the enemy compromised our communications with Martinique. He was waiting for vessels that had remained at Fort-Royal to complete their repairs, and transports carrying provisions and ammunition.[1] The French general assumed that Sir Samuel Hood intended to reach the anchorage of Sandy-Point, located on the coast, north of Basse-Terre. The harbor and the town of Sandy-Point being under the guns of Brimstone-Hill, the English squadron would have had the opportunity to send relief to General Frazer. The Count of Grasse intended to oppose the execution of this project, and he also wanted to take advantage of the superiority of his forces to engage in a decisive affair. On the 25th at daybreak, the English were off Montserrat, tacking to get upwind. As they approached land, the winds that were blowing from the east-northeast shifted back to the east-southeast.

1. The *Hector*, one of the expected ships, arrived the same day.[277]

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This circumstance allowed Admiral Hood to sail broadside to the north. He passed between the island of Nieves and the French, whom the change in breeze had driven to leeward. Our lead ships exchanged a few cannonballs with his rearguard, but this long-range cannonade could not stop the advance of the English, who, at nightfall, took the anchorage we had left the day before. Admiral Hood's ships heaved bowsprit to stern, presenting a broadside to sea.[1] Three ships positioned themselves between the land and the squadron, in order to defeat any of our ships that attempted to round one end of the line. The next day, as soon as the breeze blew, the Count of Grasse attacked the English. He marched clear of their line, directing his main effort at the vanguard. Some ships cut their cables and changed anchorages, but none of them suffered serious damage. In the afternoon, our ships repeated this maneuver, and they fought mainly against the center and rearguard of the enemy. This second attempt having been no more successful than the first, the Count of Grasse decided to blockade the British squadron. He intended to give battle to it the day it sailed. In the engagements of January 25 and 26, we had one hundred and seven killed and two hundred and seven wounded.

1. It has been said that the French maneuvers contributed more than the variations in the breeze to Admiral Hood's success. This point seems difficult to clarify. What seems certain is that the Count of Grasse, when setting sail on the 24th, did not think that his anchorage would be suitable for the British squadron. He assumed that his adversary would seek to approach Brimstone Hill. Consequently, his only concern was to block his route to Sandy Point. Having neglected to stay close to land on the night of the 24th, he did not find himself on the 25th in a position to defend access to the roadstead of Basse-Terre. As for Admiral Hood, he took advantage of the Count of Grasse's error with a foresight and skill that did him the greatest credit.[278]

Although these two cannonades were not of great importance, the commander-in-chief wrote to the minister that he had been very satisfied with the conduct of his squadron, and he drew his attention to the ship captains de Glandevez, of the *Souverain*, d'Albert de Rions, of the *Pluton*, and d'Escars, of the *Glorieux*. The English had 316 men disabled, 72 killed, and 244 wounded. Admiral Hood sent his flag captain aboard the *Ville-de-Paris* to request permission to send a ship to Antigua with his wounded. The Count of Grasse hastened to grant this authorization. When the English admiral was convinced that he no longer had to fear being attacked at his anchorage, he wanted to attempt a diversion in favor of the garrison of Brimstone Hill. On January 28, General Prescot advanced on the town of Basse-Terre at the head of fifteen hundred men. Colonel de Fléchin, who occupied this place with a small detachment, went to meet him and stopped him for a day. The Marquis de Bouillé, informed of the landing of the English, had set out with part of the expeditionary force. On learning this news, General Prescot retreated and returned to Admiral Hood's ships. The transport on which the siege artillery was embarked had broken up on the rocks near Basse-Terre. This event, together with the capture by Admiral Hood's squadron of a frigate carrying munitions, had delayed the course of military operations. The French found at the foot of the hill eight twenty-four-pounder guns, several mortars, bombs and ammunition, which they managed to transport to their camp at night. This equipment had already been in the colony for some time, and the English, who had made the mistake of not putting it in place in a timely manner, had neglected to destroy it when they withdrew to Brimstone Hill. This resource being insufficient to overcome the enemy's fire, which was very lively and well directed, the Caton received the order to land its twenty-four-pounder guns.[279]

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Finally, our sailors rescued the cannons embarked on the transport ship that had been lost on the coast. When the Marquis de Bouillé had the necessary means at his disposal, he conducted the siege with his usual vigor and energy. By February 12, all of Brimstone Hill's defenses were ruined, and the garrison no longer had any shelter. General Frazer, who retained no hope of rescue, decided to capitulate. The Marquis de Bouillé granted the garrison and the inhabitants the most favorable terms. He promised to make no changes to the administrative and judicial system of the island until the conclusion of peace. We undertook to collect, for the duration of the occupation, only two-thirds of the taxes paid by the colonists to the British government. The troops left the place with the honors of war. They were to be transported to England, on the condition that they not be used against us until they had been duly exchanged. The Marquis de Bouillé, wishing to give General Frazer and Major General Shirley a special mark of esteem for their fine defense, did not wish to consider them prisoners of war. Major General Shirley, who was Governor of Antigua, resumed his duties, and General Frazer returned to England with full freedom to serve during the war.

A convoy bringing supplies for the squadron anchored on February 13th near the island of Nieves, which had been in our possession for several days. The Count de Grasse, in a hurry to replenish supplies, of which our ships were, at that moment, completely devoid, came to anchor near the transport vessels. This decision seemed to him to have all the less inconvenience since, from his anchorage, he could see the English fires. Finally, he intended to resume his cruise the next day off the Baie des Salines. Admiral Hood, who found himself obliged, due to the inferiority of his forces, to avoid any engagement, resolved to take advantage of our distance to escape.[280]

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In the middle of the night, the English set sail by cutting their cables. Each ship left a light on its buoy as it sailed. At daybreak on the 15th, the enemy was in full view, and the Count of Grasse deemed it pointless to pursue them.

The presence of the British squadron had had no influence on events. Admiral Hood had remained in the harbor of Basse-Terre, a helpless spectator of the surrender of Brimstone Hill. Nevertheless, his eagerness to come to the aid of the island, despite his inferior forces, the foresight he had shown on January 26th in taking possession of our anchorage, and the skill with which he had eluded our surveillance, made the role he had played very honorable. As for Lieutenant General de Grasse, criticism, which seems justified, was raised against his conduct. It was difficult to explain his inaction from January 26 to February 13. Was it the means of action that he lacked? The last of the four vessels remaining in Martinique for repairs had arrived at Saint-Christophe on February 1. The Triomphant and the Brave, which were part of the convoy dispersed by bad weather in the Bay of Biscay on December 20, 1781, had joined the army the next day. The English squadron was not, like Admiral Barrington's at Saint Lucia, supported by batteries. We could anchor near it, to windward and leeward, without having anything to fear from the land. Under these conditions, and with thirty-two vessels against twenty-two, we had the right to count on a decisive advantage. We knew that Admiral Rodney, appointed to command Great Britain's naval forces in the Caribbean Sea, was expected with a squadron of twelve or fifteen vessels. We had, therefore, the greatest interest in defeating Admiral Hood before the arrival of his commander. This result had, for the whole of the operations, a completely different importance than the conquest of Saint Christopher.[281]

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After re-embarking the troops not intended to garrison the island, the Count of Grasse set sail for Martinique, arriving on February 26. The island of Montserrat had surrendered on the 22nd to a detachment of the squadron commanded by Lieutenant General de Barras.[1] The beginning of 1782 was not favorable to our adversaries. Captain de Kersaint recaptured Demerari on January 22, and the settlements of Berbice and Essequibo on February 5 and 8.

II

It had been agreed between the allied courts that the Jamaican expedition, which had been decided upon several times and always postponed, would definitively take place at the beginning of 1782. Command of the troops was entrusted to Lieutenant General Don Galvez[2], and that of the naval forces to the Count of Grasse. A division carrying four thousand men had left Cadiz in the first days of January, heading for Cape Français, the rendezvous assigned to Don Solano's squadron and the soldiers that admiral had brought from Spain in 1780. The Count of Grasse had orders to take on board his ships all available garrisons in the Windward Islands and to proceed to Santo Domingo as soon as his vessels were ready to sail. The stores in Martinique being completely empty, this general officer was obliged to wait for the arrival of a convoy from Europe to replenish supplies. Lieutenant-General de Guichen, who had returned to Brest at the end of December 1781 following a gale, had put back to sea on February 11, 1782.[3]

1. M. de Barras had been made lieutenant-general after the capitulation of York Town.

2. It was with the greatest regret that the French government, yielding to the demands of Spain, deprived the Marquis de Bouillé of a command which was due to his ability and his services.[282]

3. It will be recalled that twenty ships of the convoy that left Brest on December 13, 1781, under the escort of a squadron commanded by Lieutenant-General de Guichen, had been captured by Admiral Kempenfeldt. The others, with the exception of two ships and a few transport vessels, had been dispersed by bad weather and forced to return to Brest.

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He had been given the mission of accompanying Peynier's division offshore, which was going to India, and the ships Dauphin-Royal and Couronne, sent to Martinique with a convoy. A few days after his departure, he had reached the usual limit of English cruises without encountering any other ships. The Count of Guichen then headed for Cadiz, and the ships he was escorting had set sail for their destination.[2]

Admiral Rodney, who had left England on January 8 with seventeen ships, arrived in the Antilles at the end of February. After linking up with Sir Samuel Hood, he resolved to intercept the expected relief force in Fort Royal Bay. His ships were deployed in echelon, to windward of the French islands, from La Désirade to Saint-Vincent, and his frigates formed a line in front of the ships. The skill of Captain Mithon de Genouilly, in charge of leading the convoy, thwarted the British admiral's calculations. This officer rounded La Désirade from the north and headed for Martinique, skirting closely the lands of Guadeloupe and Dominica. He anchored with his convoy on March 20th in the harbor of Fort Royal. After this failure, which caused him great disappointment, Admiral Rodney established himself at the large islet of Saint Lucia. He detached his best frigates to monitor our movements and was ready to sail.

2. Squadron Leader Lamotte-Picquet, who had left Brest with Lieutenant-General de Guichen, separated from the fleet on February 15, twenty leagues south of Cape Finisterre. This general officer had received orders to cruise off the coasts of England and Ireland with the ships *Robuste*, on which he had his flag, and the *Pégase*. An extremely violent northerly gale forced him to return to Brest. The *Robuste* had lost its bowsprit. The *Pégase* had very serious damage. Lamotte-Picquet went aboard the ship *Invincible*.[283]

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The late arrival of the supplies needed for our squadron made the task facing the Count of Grasse very difficult. This general officer was to lead a considerable convoy to Saint-Domingue, facing an army stronger than his own. He probably regretted not having fought Lieutenant Rodney more vigorously at Saint-Christophe.

III

At daybreak on April 8, Lieutenant General de Grasse had the convoy set sail under escort of the ships *Experiment* and *Sagittaire*, and the frigates *Railleuse*, *Engageante*, and *Richmond*. A few hours later, the army, consisting of thirty-three vessels, set sail. During the day, a rearguard frigate reported forty sails in full view. It was Admiral Rodney's fleet, which had left Saint Lucia as soon as it learned of our movements. The French spent almost the entire night in calm conditions off Dominica. On the 9th, at sunrise, thirty-six vessels, five of which had three decks, were very distinctly visible astern of us and a little to leeward. The *Zélé* and the *Auguste*, which had been left to windward during the night, were not far from the most advanced English vessels. The Count of Grasse signaled the convoy to anchor off Guadeloupe, and the army to prepare for battle. In the morning, the enemy advance guard, favored by the offshore breeze, which it received first, closed in on the *Zélé* and the *Auguste*. The *Ville-de-Paris* signaled the line of battle, tacks to port, in reverse order. When our advance guard was level with the enemy's leading vessels, our army took up the tacks to starboard. The order was then given to our second squadron to attack Rodney's vanguard. The Marquis de Vaudreuil let it arrive to close in, and when he was within half a cannon range, he began firing.[1].

1. It was with intent that Squadron Leader de Vaudreuil did not position himself closer to the enemy. When I attacked the English vanguard, he said in one of his reports, I only brought ours to within half a cannon range of theirs, so as not to be dismounted by their grapeshot. Our ships were very close together, and the sharpness of our fire made them slip away in the two attacks we made, and, if we had put ourselves within range of their carronades, we would have been promptly dismounted and beaten.[284]

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The *Northumberland*, the *Sceptre*, and the *Citoyen*, which belonged to the main body, took part in this affair. After an hour of fighting, the *Royal Oak*, having had her mainmast cut off at the height of the ton, gave way and moved away. The *Montagu*, which came after the *Royal Oak*, lost both of her topmasts and fell to leeward. The English vanguard having reached broadside, while the French continued to hold the wind, the distance between the two lines increased rapidly, and, on both sides, firing ceased.[2] The Count of Grasse, preoccupied with the mission he had to fulfill, did not believe it necessary to press his advantage further. Convinced that the delay in the English fleet's march, due to the damage to its vanguard, would give the convoy sufficient headway to make its way safely, he sent orders to put to sea again. The two fleets repaired their damage during the night, and the next day they continued to sail close-hauled, tack to starboard, with winds from the east to the northeast. In order to drive the enemy away from the convoy, the Count of Grasse intended to pass to windward of the islands to reach his destination. During the night of April 10-11, the *Jason* and the *Zélé* having collided, the first of these vessels put into Guadeloupe. There it was joined by the *Caton*, whose masts were in poor condition. On the 11th, the army was about to round Les Saintes when the Count of Grasse decided to let the ship go to cover two ships, the *Magnanime* and the *Zélé*, which had fallen to leeward.

2. Admiral Rodney stated, in a letter addressed to the British Admiralty, that the ships of his vanguard, and principally the *Royal Oak* and the *Montagu*, had suffered greatly. Captain Bayne of the *Alfred* had been killed.[285]

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During the night of the 11th to the 12th, the two fleets maneuvered in calm conditions with variable breezes. At two o'clock in the morning, the *Zélé*, running on port tack, crossed paths with the *Ville-de-Paris*, which was closest to the ship, on starboard tack. The officer of the watch aboard the *Zélé*, mistaking the position of the vessel ahead, luffed instead of bearing away.[1] A collision of extreme seriousness, considering the circumstances in which we found ourselves, resulted from this erroneous maneuver. The *Ville-de-Paris* had her sails blown away, and the *Zélé* broke her bowsprit and foremast. The general sent word to the frigate *L'Astrée*, via the cutter *Le Clairvoyant*, to take this vessel in tow and sail it to Guadeloupe. At daybreak, the army was out of order, and there was a distance of several leagues between the ships that were leeward and those that were furthest to the east.[2] A few miles to leeward of the *Ville-de-Paris*, the Zélé, towed by the *Astrée*, was heading for Basse-Terre. Several English vessels were making sail and chasing the *Zélé*. The Count of Grasse believed that this vessel would fall into the hands of the enemy if he did not hasten to cover it. Although the French fleet, as a result of the incidents of the night, had gained very little in its tacking, it was still to windward of the English. At five-quarters past five, the *Ville-de-Paris* signaled the line of battle, tacks to port, in reverse order, and at six o'clock it repeated the same signal, adding that of forcing sails.

1. The Count of Grasse had taken the precaution of reminding the fleet that if, while tacking, two vessels running opposite each other happened to cross, the one on the port tack would bear away, while the other would luff. The commander-in-chief had added that all vessels, regardless of the seniority of the captains, whether or not they had any distinctive markings, were required to comply with this rule.

2. The Count of Grasse says three leagues in one of his memoirs, while the captains' reports speak of five leagues. One can understand the interest attached to this question. It is a question of knowing whether the fleet had time to form up before the beginning of the battle.[286]

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The French maneuver prompted Admiral Rodney to recall the chasers. They were downwind and four or five miles from the *Zélé* when they abandoned the pursuit. Around 7:00, the Marquis de Vaudreuil, commander of the second squadron, arrived with the *Triomphant* in the waters off the *Ville-de-Paris*. Shortly after, the *Auguste*, bearing the flag of Squadron Leader de Bougainville, commander of the third squadron, which was the vanguard in reverse order, took up its post. The two fleets, whose routes were crossing, had closed in. The captain of the *Marlborough*, the lead ship of the British fleet, assuming that he would not pass to windward of the *Hercule*, steered in such a way as to extend our leeward line. At 7:30, the Comte de Grasse signaled to prepare for battle. At this moment, the *Zélé* was about ten miles from the enemy ships that had chased him. This vessel could be considered, since six o'clock in the morning, to be beyond all reach.[1] Some of the vessels that were furthest to windward, when the *Ville-de-Paris* had signaled the line of battle, their tacks to port, had not yet rallied. A little before eight o'clock, the *Marlborough* and the *Hercule* were abeam of each other. The incoming movement of the English had caused a fairly large gap between the two lines. They were tending to come together again, the *Marlborough* having returned to close-hauled, and the other vessels maneuvering to take her waters. At eight o'clock, the Count of Grasse signaled to bear away to the south-southwest. At the time the order to execute this movement was given, the French were not yet regularly formed. The two armies were arranged in the following order:

1. The *Zélé*, towed by the *Astrée*, had been making five to six knots since six thirty in the morning.[287]

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FLOTTE FRANÇAISE.

Ligne de bataille. — Ordre renversé.

Noms des bâtiments.	Nombre de canons.	Noms des capitaines.
Troisième escadre ou *escadre bleue.*		
Hercule	74	Chadeau de la Clocheterie.
Souverain	74	De Glandevès.
Palmier	74	De Martelly-Chautard.
Northumberland	74	De Sainte-Césaire.
Neptune	74	Renaud d'Aleins.
Auguste	80	De Bougainville, chef d'escadre. De Castellan.
Ardent	64	De Gouzillon.
Scipion	74	Clavel.
Brave	74	D'Amblimont.
Citoyen	74	D'Ethy.
Première escadre ou *escadre blanche.*		
Hector	74	De la Vicomté.
César	74	De Marigny.
Dauphin-Royal	70	De Roquefeuil-Montpéroux.
Languedoc	80	D'Arros d'Argelos.
Ville-de-Paris	104	Comte de Grasse, lieutenant général. De Lavilléon. De Vaugirault, major.
Couronne	80	Mithon de Genouilly.
Eveillé	64	Le Gardeur de Tilly.
Sceptre	74	De Vaudreuil.
Glorieux	74	D'Escars.
Deuxième escadre ou *escadre blanche et bleue.*		
Diadème	74	De Monteclerc.
Destin	74	Dumaitz de Goimpy.
Magnanime	74	Le Bègue.
Réfléchi	64	De Medine.
Conquérant	74	De la Grandière.
Magnifique	74	Macarty Macteigne.
Triomphant	80	De Vaudreuil, chef d'escadre. Le chevalier du Pavillon.
Bourgogne	74	De Charitte.
Duc-de-Bourgogne	80	Coriolis d'Espinouse, chef d'escadre. De Champmartin.
Marseillais	74	De Castellane Majastre.
Pluton	74	D'Albert de Rions.

FLOTTE ANGLAISE.

Ligne de bataille. — Ordre renversé.

Noms des bâtiments.	Nombre de canons.	Noms des capitaines.
	Troisième escadre.	
Marlborough	74	Taylor Penny.
Arrogant	74	Samuel Cornish.
Alcide	74	Charles Thompson.
Nonsuch	74	William Truscott.
Conqueror	74	George Balfour.
Princesse	70	Samuel Drake, contre-amiral. Charles Knatchbull.
Prince George	98	James Williams.
Torbay	74	John Gidoin.
Anson	64	William Blair.
Jame	74	Robert Barber.
Russel	74	James Saumarez.
	Première escadre.	
America	64	Samuel Thompson.
Hercules	74	Henry Savage.
Prothée	64	Charles Buckner.
Résolution	74	Robert Manners.
Agamemnon	64	Benjamin Caldwell.
Duke	98	Allen Gardner.
Formidable	98	G. B. Rodney, vice-amiral. Charles Douglas. Johs Symonds. Cranston.
Namur	90	Inglis.
Saint-Albans	64	William Cornwallis.
Canada	74	Thomas Dumaresq.
Répulse	64	Charrington.
Ajax	74	Robert Fanshaw.
Bedford	74	Affleck, commodore. Grave.
	Deuxième escadre.	
Prince William	64	George Wilkinson.
Magnificent	74	Robert Linzee.
Centaur	74	John Inglefield.
Belliqueux	64	Alexander Sutherland.
Warrior	74	James Wallace.
Monarch	74	Francis Reynolds.
Barfleur	90	Samuel Hood, vice-amiral. John Knight.
Valiant	74	S. G. Goodall.
Yarmouth	64	Anthony Parry.
Montagu	74	George Bowen.
Alfred	74	
Royal-Oak	74	Thomas Burnett.

The first cannon shots were fired at the *Marlborough* by the *Brave*, which was a few ranks behind the *Auguste*. With the English running close-hauled, tacks to starboard, and the French four-quarters broadside, tacks to port, the distance separating us from the enemy was quickly closed. The English vanguard had not yet overtaken our leader when some of the ships of our third squadron were fighting at close range. Around 8:30, the signal to tack, luff for luff, all at once, was hoisted aboard the *Ville-de-Paris*. The ship of the commander of the second squadron repeated it, backing it up with several cannon shots. It was up to the *Pluton*, the rearguard of the army, to begin the movement. Captain Albert de Rions noticed the *Auguste's* signal, but he remained convinced that the ship was mistaken in repeating the signals. This opinion seemed all the more justified to him, since the ships placed between the *Pluton* and the *Triomphant* did not have the flags expressing this order at their mastheads. Convinced that this maneuver could only have disastrous consequences, he refused to believe that it had been ordered. Indeed, our ships, caught in enfilade for a time all the longer because the breeze was very light, would have suffered considerable losses from the start.[1] It should not be forgotten that, at this moment, from the *Hercules* to the *Magnifique*, the fighting was in close quarters. Shortly after, the *Triomphant*[2], the rear sailor of the *Magnifique*, the *Duc-de-Bourgogne*, the *Marseillais* and the *Pluton*, were engaged.

1. The *Triomphant* and the ships following it were close enough to communicate by voice. Lieutenant General de Vaudreuil did not use this method to give the *Pluton* the order to begin movement. M. d'Albert de Rions saw this as further proof that the signal hoisted aboard the *Triomphant* did not express an order of this importance.

2. Squadron Leader de Vaudreuil states formally, in one of his memoirs, that the *Marlborough* passed within gunshot of the *Triomphant*. Now, at that moment, the *Ville-de-Paris* still had, at the masthead, the signal to tack luff for luff, all at once.[288]

The vanguard frigates had signaled that the signal to tack luff for luff, all at once, had been seen by the third squadron. No doubt wanting to put an end to the indecision that must have reigned in the fleet, following the failure to execute this order, the Count of Grasse brought the first signal, and replaced it with that of keeping to the wind, with the tacks to port. Between 8:45 and 9:00, the Count of Grasse signaled to tack luff for luff by the countermarch. On board the *Hercule*, this signal was seen for a moment on the masts of the vanguard commander's ship, but the smoke having almost immediately enveloped the *Auguste*, Captain Chadeau de la Clocheterie refused to take responsibility for this movement. Around 9:45, the winds, which until then had been easterly, shifted to the southeast. At the moment when this variation in the breeze occurred, which had a decisive influence on the outcome of the day, the English rearguard had just entered the line. The French ships, obliged to let them arrive so as not to mask, found themselves in a checkerboard pattern. In this order, they could not maintain a regular formation while fighting. The English vanguard continued to run to leeward of our fleet. In the center of the British army, the *Formidable*, on which the commander-in-chief had his flag, and her two sailors, kept close to the wind. At about ten fifteen, the *Namur*, the *Formidable*, the *Duke*, and the *Canada* cut the French line astern of the *Glorieux*. This seventy-four-man ship, which had already withstood the fire of the English vanguard, was dismasted. These four ships extended, on the port side, our second squadron, which was forced to fight on both sides. Sir Samuel Hood, imitating Rodney's maneuver, passed with his squadron astern of the *Caesar*. This vessel and the *Hector*, which preceded it in the line, were cannonaded by all the ships of the English rearguard, and were very badly treated.[289]

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Instead of bearing away, to extend our first squadron to windward, Sir Samuel Hood ran close-hauled, tack to starboard. The *Ville-de-Paris* and several ships in our center ceased firing at 10:30, having no more enemies, either to windward or leeward. On all other points, and especially at the vanguard, the fighting continued with great vivacity. The breeze, which had been very light, freshened a little around 11:00. The *Glorieux*, completely dismasted, had been unable to follow the movement of its squadron, and remained isolated. The Count of Grasse having signaled the frigates to lead this vessel out of the fire, one of them, the *Richmond*, Captain Mortemart, intrepidly came to position itself at its bow and gave it a tow. Several English ships, taking advantage of the light breeze blowing at that moment, steered towards the *Glorieux*. Lieutenant Trogoff de Kerlessi, who had replaced Viscount d'Escars, killed at nine o'clock in the morning, had the tow cut. He refused to accept the devotion of this frigate, which would have been lost without being able to save him.

Around one o'clock, a light easterly breeze having risen, the smoke disappeared, and the situation of the two armies could be seen. The French were divided into three main groups. The third squadron was to windward and about two miles from the *Ville-de-Paris*, near which were its two sailors, the *Languedoc* and the *Couronne*, and four other vessels. The second squadron was three or four miles to leeward of the commander-in-chief's ship. The *Glorieux* was to windward of the *Ville-de-Paris*; the *Hector* and the *César* were a little to windward of our vanguard. The ships which, under the command of Admirals Rodney and Hood, had cut our line, the former astern of the *Glorieux*, the latter astern of the *Caesar*, were to windward of our fleet.[290]

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The enemy vanguard continued to sail close-hauled, tacks to starboard, in order to be able to overtake us to windward after tacking. A fresh breeze blowing at the opening of the canal favored our adversaries' movements. At a quarter past one, the Count of Grasse signaled to rally to the order of battle, tacks to port, in reverse order. Shortly after, he signaled the second squadron to hold the wind, all at once, and at two o'clock, he repeated his first signal. Due to its position close to land, the French fleet was almost calm. From time to time, a slight breeze arose, varying in strength and direction. This circumstance, combined with the state of some of our ships, made our movements very slow and any formation difficult, if not impossible. The *Glorieux*, dismasted of all her masts, the *Hector* and the *César*, almost completely unrigged, could do nothing more if they were not rescued. Several ships of the vanguard, before which the entire English fleet had paraded in the morning, were maneuvering with difficulty. The *Auguste*, carrying the flag of the commander of the third squadron, had returned to independent maneuver at noon, and since that time she had been repairing her damage. While the French, dispersed as a result of the variations in the breeze and the incidents of the morning, were trying to reestablish the original order of battle, the enemy vanguard was joining Hood and Rodney. The English ships, scattered without order to windward of our line, steered towards those of our ships which were isolated. At three-thirty, the Count of Grasse signaled to hold to the wind, all at once, with the tacks to starboard, and, at four o'clock, to form the line of battle, with the tacks to starboard in the natural order. At this moment, the *Glorieux*, the *César* and the *Hector* had succumbed. A ship of the vanguard, the *Ardent*, of sixty-four guns, surrounded around five o'clock by several enemy vessels, lowered its flag. A very lively fight began around the ship of the commander-in-chief. The enemy forces, ready to take part in the fight, accumulated at this point.[291]

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The *Ville-de-Paris* and some of the ships alongside her, such as the *Bourgogne*, the *Triomphant*, the *Languedoc*, the *Couronne*, the *Pluton*, the *Sceptre*, the *Magnifique*, and the *Marseillais*, fought on both sides. The flagship, although exhausted by a day of fighting, put up a heroic resistance to the attacks of her numerous adversaries. At 5:30, she was bombarded by nine ships. A little before 6:00, a three-decker, the *Barsteur*, mounted by Vice-Admiral Hood, joined the attackers. At 6:15, the Count of Grasse surrendered to the English a vessel that he, his officers, and his crew had defended with the most admirable valour. The ship's hull was riddled with cannon fire, the masts were about to fall, the ammunition was exhausted, and the ship was littered with dead and wounded.[1] This event gave command of the fleet to Squadron Leader de Vaudreuil. The new general had only the time strictly necessary to take the measures required by the circumstances. Night was approaching, and it was necessary to prevent the direction of our fleet from being left to chance. The Marquis de Vaudreuil gave the order to the *Bourgogne*, which was the closest ship to the *Ville-de-Paris*, to make sail. He himself, on the *Triomphant*, let it arrive and moved away from the battlefield, having the rallying signal at the masthead. He hailed the ships he passed near to inform them of the route he intended to follow. He refused to make any signals for fear that the enemy would be able to interpret them.[2] The French army withdrew without being disturbed.

1. The English towed the *Ville-de-Paris* to Jamaica.

2. The following few lines, taken from a passage in the memoirs of the Marquis de Vaudreuil, indicate precisely the last moments of the battle: Until the moment when the *Ville-de-Paris* surrendered, I had no sails other than what was necessary to steer. We followed exactly the movements of the *Ville-de-Paris* in all the hauls and arrivals so as not to stray far. At six thirty, having seen her coming across, after firing on both sides, cease her fire and lower her signal flags, I looked at her flag staff, the flag was lowered. It was then that I shouted to M. de Charitte to make sail, that I made sail myself and that I had the other vessels make sail, giving them the course that they had to keep.[292]

Admiral Rodney, in his report, only reported 237 dead and 766 wounded. The French losses were certainly much higher. We do not give them because we have not found any document indicating them, for all the ships, with sufficient authenticity. A large number of officers were killed or wounded that day.[1]

This is the account of the various incidents that marked the fateful day of April 12. After this account, to which we have added no commentary, we will investigate the general's plan and the means he employed to execute it. We will also examine whether he found, among the general officers and captains of his fleet, the support he had the right to expect. The Battle of Dominica is the most significant maritime event of the War of Independence; moreover, the day of April 12 has been variously assessed. For this twofold reason, it deserves a thorough examination.

1. Among the first were: Messrs. de Saint-Césaire, du Pavillon, d'Escars, de la Clocheterie, de la Vicomté, and Bernard de Marigny, ship captains; de la Mettrie, l'Hermite-Maillane, de Karvel, d'Orsin, de Villeneuve-Flayosc, and de Rebender, ship lieutenants; de Beaucouse, Visdelou de Liscouel, and de Quattromani, ship ensigns; de Brochereuil, Moracin, auxiliary officers; de Kerolain, naval guard; de la Forgerie, and de Trogoff, infantry officers. Wounded officers: Messrs. de Vaudreuil, squadron leader; Le Bègue, de Thy, de Médine, and de Champmartin, ship captains; de Mallet, du Roure, de Vieuxbourg de Rosily, de Clerimbert, de Champagny, Dupuy, de Carcaradec, d'Assas-Mondardier, Tredern de Lezerec, Despiès, de Trogoff, de Portzampar, lieutenants; Barton de Montbas, de Laulanie, de Marnières de Montigny, ensigns; de Blessinga, de Toll, Swedish officers; Charron-Duportaille, Roland, Levilain, du Frossey, Bicher, Martin, Quinart, auxiliary officers; le Livec, from Châteaufur, marine guards; de Monlezun, de Gouillard, de Villé, de Montel, de Quetteville, de Montalembert, de la Brosse, Dejean, Tanneguy, Deshayes, d'Adhémar, de Coquet, de Trouront, de Kerlerec, de Saint Simon, de Renouard, de Boisgantin, infantry officers.[293]

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IV

Admiral Rodney had thirty-six ships under his command, including five three-deckers. Count de Grasse, after assigning two ships to escort the convoy, set sail with thirty-three ships, of which only one, the *Ville-de-Paris*, was a three-decker. From April 8 to 12, he successively detached the *Caton*, the *Jason*, and the *Zélé*. At the Battle of Dominica, he had thirty ships with a total of two thousand two hundred and forty-six guns, while the British fleet had two thousand six hundred and seventy-four guns. It is therefore certain that there was a significant disparity in strength between the two fleets. Nevertheless, the mistakes made by the French commander-in-chief contributed more to the loss of the battle than the numerical superiority of the enemy. On April 9, Count de Grasse had, if not the certainty, at least very strong chances of defeating a portion of the British fleet. He did not take advantage of this opportunity for fear of being drawn into a general engagement that would have prevented him from accomplishing his mission. How, then, on the 12th, did he expose himself to that same general engagement with only thirty ships, when on the 9th he had thirty-three? Was it to protect the *Zélé*? Here Count de Grasse made a very unfortunate mistake. Assuming, which was doubtful, that the *Zélé* had been in danger for a moment, the demonstration by the *Ville-de-Paris* had been sufficient to free it from any peril. Consequently, immediately after Admiral Rodney recalled his chasing ships, the French commander was free to resume his starboard tack. If Count de Grasse, misjudging the situation of the *Zélé*, exposed himself to the risks of a general engagement to save that ship, at least he should have positioned his fleet in the best possible conditions for battle. Unfortunately, he did not do so.[294]

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On April 12, at dawn, the French ships were scattered, and the distance between them varied between three and five leagues. Ignoring this situation, Count de Grasse steered his own ship towards the enemy. He was so eager to come to the aid of the *Zélé* that he did not allow his squadron time to form up. Finally, while heading towards Dominica, he encountered calm waters and shifting winds. Whether he had noticed that the breeze was weakening as they approached the shore, or whether, recalling the events of April 9, he hoped for only a partial engagement, Count de Grasse decided to bring his ships into line with the English. He first, as already mentioned, gave the signal for all ships to tack simultaneously, then the signal to tack in succession. These signals, seen for a moment by some ships, including the *Pluton* and the *Hercule*, disappeared into the smoke. M. d'Albert de Rions, one of the best officers in the French navy, and M. de la Clocheterie, the former captain of the *Belle-Poule*, finding themselves left to their own judgment, hesitated to execute a maneuver that would have disastrous consequences for the fleet. It is worth noting that, in this matter, these two captains were not acting alone. The *Pluton* and the *Hercule* continued to sail, with their port side to the wind, without responding to the admiral's signals; it would have been the duty of the squadron commanders, Vaudreuil in the first case, and Bougainville in the second, to take the initiative, as the *Saint-Esprit* had done at the Battle of Ushant. These two general officers, no more than Captains Rions and La Clocheterie, had no right to question the orders of the commander-in-chief. However, neither of them even considered deviating from the line to initiate the maneuver, because, in reality, by the time the signals for changing course were hoisted, the French fleet no longer had the freedom to move as it pleased.[1]

1. When the signal to turn simultaneously in opposite directions was given—that is, at the moment when Rear Admiral Vaudreuil should have begun the maneuver that the *Pluton* was not executing—the *Triomphant*, on which his flag was flying, was engaged in combat at close range.[295]

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Count de Grasse stated in one of his memoirs: “Since the ships already under enemy fire could be as badly damaged as the *Ville-de-Paris*, which had most of its rigging cut and its sails riddled with holes, thus preventing them from tacking to windward, and since any ship, even with damaged rigging, can always tack to leeward, I signaled the fleet to tack to leeward all together.”[2] Thus, Count de Grasse acknowledged that it was impossible to tack to windward. As for a simultaneous tacking maneuver, whether by turning individually or all at once, the proximity of the enemy line made it impossible to execute. “Our line,” wrote Rear Admiral de Vaudreuil after the battle, “formed under musket fire. The English had new artillery which, at close range, quickly damaged the ships.[3] If the *Pluton* had begun the maneuver when the general signaled to tack simultaneously, only four or five ships would have been able to tack, which would have created a gap, as the others were too close to the enemy.”

2. We see, from the testimony of the commander-in-chief himself, that the lead ship of the enemy fleet had passed our center at the moment the signals for changing tack were hoisted. This agrees well with the statement of the captain of the *Pluton*, who said that the *Marlborough* had passed alongside the *Magnifique*, the ship immediately ahead of the *Triomphant*, the flagship of the commander of the second squadron, when the signal to tack simultaneously was seen on board the latter ship. It seems difficult to accept that the two fleets were separated by a great distance, as stated by the Count of Grasse, given that in his own report he wrote that, at that moment, i.e., at the beginning of the action, the *Ville-de-Paris* had suffered the most damage, with many of its rigging lines cut and its sails riddled with holes.

3. In the report that Rear Admiral de Vaudreuil sent to the minister upon his arrival in Jamaica, he wrote: “Allow me, Your Excellency, to point out that all the British warships have a large number of carronades, howitzers, or small-caliber guns of very large caliber mounted on their upper decks, the effect of which is extremely deadly at musket range. It was these new weapons that inflicted such heavy damage on us on April 12th. The British have also adopted the use of gun carriages, with which they aim their guns far more accurately than with the traditional method of using a firelock. I believe that we cannot wait any longer to equip ourselves with the same weapons in order to counter them effectively.”[296]

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"An army does not tack to windward with a following wind when the enemy is to leeward within musket range." It was because Count de Grasse chose to sail with the wind on the port side that our line was broken by the English. This maneuver, which should not be seen as a preconceived military plan, but rather as a bold act inspired by the circumstances, had a decisive influence on the outcome of the day. Of the five ships that fell into the hands of the enemy, three—the *Glorieux*, the *Hector*, and the *César*—had been completely disabled that morning by the ships that had crossed our line. At 1:15 PM, the signal to reform the battle line, with the wind on the port side, in reverse order, was hoisted aboard the *Ville-de-Paris*. This prompt reformation of the fleet was clearly the objective we should have aimed for, but was the method used by Count de Grasse the most appropriate to achieve it? To restore the original battle order, all the ships, except those belonging to the second squadron, were forced to tack. Indeed, it was impossible to return to the battle line with the wind on the port side without forming up on the ships to leeward. Now, the second squadron was several miles to leeward of the first squadron, which itself was to leeward of the third. Perhaps it would have been better to reform the fleet on the first squadron. The second squadron would have tacked to take its position, and the ships that remained to windward would have been more easily supported. Moreover, the movement of the second squadron would have had no disadvantage, since, at that moment, half of the English fleet was still sailing with the wind on the starboard side.[1]

1. Such was the Marquis de Vaudreuil's plan. He was about to tack to windward and maneuver to get closer to the *Ville-de-Paris*, when the Comte de Grasse signaled his squadron to make full sail. He immediately obeyed this latter order.[297]

The English fleet continued to sail with the starboard tack. In any case, the *Glorieux*, the *César*, and the *Hector* could not carry out the orders of the commander-in-chief, that is, rejoin the fleet, unless they received assistance. This task fell to the vanguard, which was to windward of the first squadron. But this vanguard had, in the morning, engaged in very heavy fighting against the entire English fleet, which was sailing on the opposite tack. It had suffered considerable damage, and most of the ships composing it were dismasted. The *Auguste*, having remained out of the action from noon until five o'clock in the afternoon to repair its damage, the third squadron did not receive the precise and energetic impetus it needed, given its circumstances, to act cohesively. The *Neptune* and the *Hercule*, which had fought very well in the morning, did not make sufficient efforts to rejoin the *Ville-de-Paris* when the order was given, at four o'clock in the afternoon, to form the line of battle, with the starboard tack, in the natural order.[2] One of the ships in this squadron, the *Souverain*, attempted to rescue the *Glorieux*, but before it could reach him to offer a tow, Captain de Glandevès had to make sail and move away. Several English ships were maneuvering to intercept him. The Duc-de-Bourgogne, belonging to the second squadron, had its rigging severely damaged in the morning engagement, and it had fallen to leeward. Its captain was less concerned with returning to his position than with getting his ship back into a condition to sail. After noting these minor errors, inseparable from any military operation, we must highlight the fine actions that took place during this day.

2. Captain Chadeau de la Clocheterie had been killed in the morning.[298]

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We must first mention the magnificent defense of the *Ville-de-Paris*. "What could the name and the hundred cannons of my ship do," wrote Count de Grasse in one of his memoirs, "against ten other ships that bombarded it with more than four hundred cannonballs, all at once, while we could only offer them one side? Deprived of all its rigging, rigged again under enemy fire, and then stripped of it once more, its masts pierced and swaying, its sails riddled and torn to shreds, its yards cut, its crew having eaten no food from dawn to dusk, the *Ville-de-Paris* could have surrendered without shame or reproach, and I wanted to defend it further; but forced to keep all the ports open to fire from port, starboard, and aft, my powder ran out. I could then only load my cannons a little at a time, by the dim light of my lanterns, and I was distressed that I could never keep them lit, because of the smoke and the double concussion. Then, no longer able to fire a single shot, being cannoned at close range, losing many men, and at the same time, at a distance too great to use my musketry, I had to surrender. I was reduced to such a state that on the morning of the 13th, the enemy, to hoist their flag of command, had to cut down the masts, for fear that, in climbing them, they would be swept overboard or crushed by their fall."

The conduct of the officers who successively commanded the *César*, the *Hector*, and the *Glorieux* was beyond praise. These three ships, as we have already mentioned, were completely disabled by the enemy ships that broke through our line. Surrounded by the English, with no hope of being rescued, they fought until their strength was completely exhausted. The captains of the *Escars, Glorieux, La Vicomté*, and *Hector* ships were killed, and Captain Bernard de Marigny of the *César* was seriously wounded, all within a few hours of the start of the battle.[299]

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Captain of the ship Paul, and the naval lieutenants Trogoff de Kerlessi and de Beaumanoir, who succeeded them in command of the *César*, the *Glorieux*, and the *Hector*, proved themselves worthy successors of such leaders. On the evening of April 12, a fire broke out on board the *César*. Captain Bernard de Marigny was lying in his bed when sailors rushed into his cabin, shouting that the ship was about to explode. "All the better!" he replied, "The English won't have it. Close the door, my friends, and try to save yourselves." It is difficult to imagine these officers demonstrating a stronger sense of military honor. Their names must not be forgotten.[1] The squadron commander, the Marquis de Vaudreuil, on the *Triomphant*, and the captains Albert de Rions of the *Pluton*, Charitte of the *Bourgogne*, Castellane of the *Marseillais*, and Macarty Macteigne of the *Magnifique*, displayed as much skill as bravery. The Languedoc and the *Couronne*, two sailors from the *Ville-de-Paris*, fought valiantly in defense of that ship. "I can affirm," wrote the Marquis de Vaudreuil, "that at six-thirty in the evening, when the *Ville-de-Paris* surrendered, the *Languedoc* was in front of me, within shouting distance, and in a state of utter disrepair. It was fighting against the same ships that forced the surrender of Count de Grasse. Between it and the *Ville-de-Paris* were only the *Triomphant* and the *Bourgogne*; the *Couronne* was also in front of me, not far away. The *Languedoc* and the *Couronne*, along with the *Sceptre* and several other ships of the battle line, had come to join our efforts to rescue the *Ville-de-Paris*, and they took up positions wherever they could."

1. None of the ships captured on April 12 ever reached the shores of Great Britain. The *Ville-de-Paris*, the *Glorieux*, and the *Hector* all sank, along with their crews and cargo, on their return voyage to Europe. Two English ships, the *Centaur* and the *Ramillies*, met the same fate. The *Ardent* did not suffer such a tragic end. A few days after setting sail for England, this ship returned to Jamaica, leaking badly. Having been deemed unseaworthy, it was subsequently dismantled.[300]

It was the duty of the ships closest to the *Ville-de-Paris* to make the sacrifice, as did the *Sceptre*, the *Couronne*, the *Languedoc*, the *Triomphant*, the *Bourgogne*, and several others, which only set sail when ordered to do so by the general, after the *Ville-de-Paris* had surrendered and I had indicated the course they should follow. However, we had been engaged in combat on both sides for some time, as had the *Bourgogne* and the *Languedoc*, before the *Ville-de-Paris* surrendered.[1]"

It follows from the above that the true causes of our defeat are, above all, the inexplicable blindness that seized Count de Grasse on the morning of April 12. He wanted to save the *Zélé*, when that ship was not in any danger. Even assuming he was mistaken on this point, at 6:30 in the morning he should have been quite certain that the *Zélé* could not be overtaken by the ships pursuing it. He was therefore free to continue his course northward. Instead of taking this decision, which was imperatively dictated by the circumstances, he steered towards the enemy without even giving his ships time to form a line of battle.

1. The opinion of Rear Admiral de Vaudreuil had particular significance. The conduct of this brave officer had been approved by Count de Grasse and in Paris. Count de Grasse had written to him from Jamaica, on May 1, 1782, that his maneuvers, as well as the signals made by the *Triomphant* to the second squadron, had been in accordance with his intentions. On September 8, 1782, the Marquis de Castries wrote to him: "Although the efforts you made, sir, on April 12, 1782, with the division you commanded, to uphold the general's reputation, were not crowned with success, His Majesty was nonetheless pleased with the further evidence you gave of your zeal and courage, and He wished to publicly acknowledge this by promoting you to the rank of Lieutenant General. I am sure you can appreciate the pleasure I have in announcing this promotion to you."

No other favors were granted to the squadron when it returned to France in 1783. Lieutenant General de Vaudreuil was the only officer permitted to present his respects to the King. This situation remained unchanged until the verdict of the court-martial, which we will discuss later.[301]

Intending to engage the enemy with his ships' starboard side to the wind, he approached the English fleet so closely that his own ships no longer had sufficient space to maneuver. This was a critical error for a fleet commander, and Count de Grasse committed it; nothing could excuse him. The signals he gave to bring his fleet into line with the enemy must be considered meaningless, since they were given at a time when the commander-in-chief should have realized they could not be executed. The shift in the wind, which allowed Admiral Rodney to break through our line, further disrupted our ranks. Finally, the enemy found a breeze at the entrance to the Saintes Channel, while we, off Dominica, had only calm or light breezes, in which our ships could not maneuver. In short, Count de Grasse fought unnecessarily with thirty ships against thirty-six, and the dispositions he made, far from improving this already unfavorable situation, only worsened it.

Here is an observation that concerns not Count de Grasse, but the Navy Department. It will be recalled that the Marquis de Vaudreuil emphasized the role played by the "carronades, or small-caliber guns of very large caliber, which were mounted on the upper decks of the English ships, and whose effect was extremely deadly at musket range." He said that this new artillery, firing at close range, "very quickly crippled the ships." The absence of this same artillery on our ships did not cause the loss of the battle, but it certainly contributed to it, since the fighting took place at very close range. The mistake made by the Navy Department in not adopting this innovation was all the greater given that a similar proposal had been submitted to them before the war by Captain de Suffren. Before making a decision, the minister had wanted to consult with the naval ports. The question posed was: would it be advantageous to carry shells on board the ships?[302]

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After receiving the replies from Brest, Rochefort and Toulon, the offices drafted a note for the minister, stating: "The port of Brest prefers to increase the number of swivel guns; the other two ports propose to test the shells, but they do not express any opinion for or against," and further on, "the testing of shells is simply proposed by the ports of Rochefort and Toulon." It was indeed significant that two ports had given a favorable opinion. The offices did not see it that way, and the matter ended there.... Suffren, while equipping the *Zélé* at Toulon in 1779, returned to this idea, and in a report to the minister he said: "Bombs have always been considered very dangerous for ships, and I believe rightly so. Shells are less so, but they are still very dangerous, so I believe that we should equip ships with mortars, placing them on the poop deck from where they would inflict terrible damage if loaded with shrapnel. I would like to conduct an experiment. For this, we could borrow two from the navy, and, depending on the success, we would decide whether to adopt them or reject them." This request was not followed up. It is never easy to see new ideas triumph.[1]

Admiral Rodney's victory aroused understandable enthusiasm in England. It was the first serious advantage gained by our adversaries in a pitched battle. Both Houses of Parliament voted thanks to Admiral Rodney, Admirals Samuel Hood and Drake, Commodore Affleck, Captain Sir Charles Douglas of the Formidable, and all the captains, officers, sailors and soldiers aboard the fleet. Rodney was raised to the peerage, Vice-Admiral Samuel Hood became a peer of Ireland, and Rear-Admiral Drake and Commodore Affleck were made baronets.

1. A note on the various proposals made by Suffren can be found in the documents included at the end of this volume.[303]

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England not only rewarded the living, but also wished to honor the dead. The House of Commons decided that a monument would be erected in memory of Captains Bayne of the *Alfred*, Blair of the *Anson*, and Lord Robert Manners of the *Resolution*, who had met a glorious death in the battles of April 9 and 12. The news of our defeat caused great consternation in France. Admirals d'Orvilliers, d'Estaing, and de Guichen, and Captain Des Touches, had not had the good fortune to capture any enemy ships, but none of the ships under their command had fallen into the hands of the English. In these encounters, where the advantage had almost always been ours, our conduct had demonstrated the strength of our fleets. If the unfortunate outcome of the battle of Dominica wounded the nation's justifiable pride, it only served to further inflame its patriotism. The Paris City Council, the Estates of Burgundy, the shipowners of the main ports, and the merchants of the large cities, all voted substantial sums, to which numerous private subscriptions were added, for the construction of new ships.

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It was by a letter written on board the *Formidable*, the day after the battle, that the Count de Grasse informed the French government of the disaster that had befallen our forces. In this letter, which one cannot read without a painful sense of surprise, he blamed most of his captains for the misfortunes of the day. Some had disobeyed his signals; others, including the Languedoc and the Couronne, that is, his two flagship ships, had abandoned him. Following this initial report, while he was in London, the Count de Grasse submitted several further reports in which he treated his officers with the utmost severity.[304]

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He did not merely, as would have been his duty, send these memoirs to the minister; he distributed them throughout Europe. The government, believing in the sincerity of Count de Grasse, resolved to find the culprits and punish them without any leniency. Marshal de Castries appointed, in each port, a commission tasked with interrogating the captains, officers, and first mates who had served on the ships present at the battle of Dominica. All the depositions, as well as the ship logs, were sent to Paris. As soon as peace was signed, orders were given to detain in port the officers who had belonged to Count de Grasse's fleet. By the beginning of 1784, almost all of them were at the disposal of the minister. A court-martial, composed of Lieutenant Generals Breugnon, de Guichen, Lacarry, Deshayes de Cry, Lamotte-Picquet, and the squadron commanders d'Apchon, Nieuil, Balleroy, Kermadec, Thévenard, and Cheriseys, convened in Lorient. The court's mission was defined in the following passage from a letter that Marshal de Castries addressed to its president, Lieutenant General de Breugnon: "The King's orders," said the Minister of the Navy, "are to determine whether the general's orders, transmitted by signal, were carried out on the 12th of April; whether the sailors on the flagship were more concerned with preserving the ship than their own safety; and finally, whether each individual fulfilled his duty in all that he could and should have done." General officers and captains, from the commander of the second squadron to the captain of the brigantine *Le Clairvoyant*, appeared before the court. Captains d'Arros of the *Languedoc*, Mithon de Genouilly of the *Couronne*, Gouzillon of the *Ardent*, d'Amblimont of the *Brave*, Albert de Rions of the *Pluton*, Roquart of the frigate *Galathée*, Suzannet of the *Aimable*, Paroy of the *Cérès*, and d'Aché of the schooner *Clairvoyant* were accused of failing to perform their duties on April 12.[305]

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These officers, according to the terminology of the time, were ordered to appear before the council for a personal hearing, while the other army captains "were summoned to be heard." The letters from the Count of Grasse so harshly criticized the conduct of the *Languedoc* and *Couronne* that the minister, convinced of their guilt, had them imprisoned upon their arrival in France. A few days before the council meeting, Messrs. Mithon de Genouilly and d'Arros were transferred to the citadel of Port-Louis. The council's ruling was issued in May 1784. We reproduce below the main points of this judgment, which put an end to the numerous controversies raised by the battle of Dominica.

Having considered, in the council chamber...

The order of the War Council of January 23, which directs that the Count of Grasse be summoned to the Council to be heard at the request of the King's Attorney General...

The summonses given to the witnesses and to the aforementioned gentlemen, the Count of Grasse, d'Arros, and Mithon, at the request of the said King's Attorney General... The order of the War Council of February 4, stating that the petition presented to the Council by the Count of Grasse will be rejected as containing unacceptable language, and that his statement, included in said petition, will be accepted by the Council; The petition submitted to the Council by the aforementioned Count de Grasse, requesting that his reply to the observations of the Marquis de Vaudreuil, along with the supporting documents upon which it is based, be filed with the registry...

The memorandum of the Marquis de Vaudreuil, at the end of which is his request that the Council order the deletion and striking out of the first two sentences of paragraph 19 and 20 of the Count de Grasse's supporting memorandum, beginning with the words "The second squadron, noticing..." and ending with "Surrounded on all sides," as being defamatory; and that the Council further order that the engraved plates attached to the said memorandum be rejected as contrary to the truth and capable of giving the general public, who would not be able to discern their inaccuracies, a false impression of the battle of April 12, 1782; and that, moreover, the Council order the suppression of the Count de Grasse's reply, as containing insulting language, defamatory and implausible statements, and matters contrary to the honor and reputation of the said Marquis de Vaudreuil……[306]

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The War Council, disregarding the conclusions of the King's Prosecutor, who had proposed an expedited trial, and also disregarding the request of the aforementioned M. de Charitte, has issued and hereby issues summonses to the aforementioned Marquis de Vaudreuil, Count de Vaudreuil, and M. de Bougainville... stating that, in accordance with Article 19 of Title 14 of the Ordinance of 1670, they are entitled to present their case based on the evidence, and that they agree to the final judgment of the case in its current state without further investigation, and finally, that they request to be judged based on their personal statements or answers.

Having considered all of the above, and proceeding to the final judgment of this case,

The Council commends the conduct of Joseph-Gabriel de Poulpiquet, Chevalier de Coatlès, Lieutenant of the Navy, who took command of the *Hercule* after the commanding officer, M. de la Clocheterie, was killed on April 12, 1782, during all the events of that day. However, for not having done everything possible that day to rally the *Ville-de-Paris* after the signal for battle formation, starboard tack, was given around four o'clock in the afternoon, he is ordered to appear before the Council for a reprimand, in the presence of the assembled court. The Council acquits Joseph Amasieu de Ruat, Lieutenant on the said ship, of all charges.

For Laurent-Emmanuel de Renaud Daleins, captain of the ship *Neptune*, having failed to do everything possible on the said day, April 12, to rejoin the *Ville-de-Paris* after the signal for battle formation (starboard tack, normal order) was given at approximately four o'clock, the court-martial sentences him to be summoned to the council chamber to receive a reprimand in the presence of the assembled court.

Jean-Baptiste de Glandevès, captain of the ship *Le Souverain*, is acquitted of all charges.

Joseph-Jacques-François de Martelli Chautard, captain of the ship *Le Palmier*, is acquitted of all charges.[307]

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He praised and continues to praise the memory of Mr. de Sainte-Césaire, captain and commander of the ship *Northumberland*, and the memory of de Lamettrie, who served as second-in-command on the said ship, both of whom fought valiantly; Mr. de Sainte-Césaire until he was mortally wounded, and de Lamettrie until his death.

He absolves Marie-Gabriel de Combaud de Roquebrune, midshipman, who took command of the said ship *Northumberland*, from all charges.

The Court Martial unanimously declares him worthy of the King's favor.

It declares the conduct of Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, rear admiral, commander of the third squadron of the King's fleet, or the Blue Squadron, aboard the ship *Auguste*, irreproachable until noon on the said day, April 12, 1782. However, since this rear admiral did not, in the afternoon, issue specific signals and maneuver his squadron for the quickest possible regrouping with the main fleet, it sentences him to be summoned to the Council Chamber to be reprimanded in the presence of the assembled court.

It absolves Pierre-Joseph de Castellan, flag captain of the said ship *Auguste*,

And Augustin de Truguet, lieutenant, serving on the said ship, acting as major of the said Blue Squadron, from all charges.

It declares the conduct of Jean-Guillaume-Michel de Gouzillon, commander of the ship *Ardent*, irreproachable on the said day, April 12, until the moment he struck his flag. But for not prolonging his resistance as much as he could have, it suspends him from his duties for three months.

It absolves Alexandre Demalys Le Grand, lieutenant, serving on the said ship *Ardent*, as second-in-command and acting lieutenant, from all charges; Guillaume-Casimir le Veneur, Louis-Casimir-Marie-Avice de Tourville, Joseph-Anatase de Saint-Pern, Antoine Pinière de Clavin, and Charles-François le Groiny de la Romage, ensigns, who were aboard the same ship.

He commended and continues to commend the conduct of Pierre-Antoine de Clavel, captain of the ship *Scipion*, during the battle of that day, April 12. Although very ill, he had himself carried to the deck, where he fought bravely that morning. However, too weak due to his illness to then manage the maneuvers necessary to execute the signals and rally the troops, the court dismisses the charges brought against him.[308]

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Discharge from all charges of Claude-François Regnard Defuschamberg, Count of Amblimont, captain, commanding the ship *Le Brave*;

And Jean-Baptiste de Marbotin Rubérons, lieutenant, serving on board said ship and in charge of signaling.

The court unanimously praised the conduct and maneuvers of Alexandre d'Ethy, captain, commanding the ship *Le Citoyen*, both during the battle and throughout the day of April 12, and discharges him from all charges.

The court praised the memory of Mr. de la Vicomté, captain, commanding the ship *L'Hector*, who defended this ship with the utmost bravery until 4:15 pm on April 12, when he was killed, having fought without interruption from the morning until 2:30 pm, and having had only very short breaks since then, having been repeatedly attacked by superior forces.

The court praised the conduct of Julien-François de Beaumanoir, captain, serving as second lieutenant, who took command of the ship *L'Hector* at 4:15 pm on April 12, and continued the fight for another quarter of an hour, despite the dilapidated state of the ship at that time; the court discharges him from all charges.

The court also discharges from all charges François-Pierre-Jean Dekmorial, naval lieutenant; Marie-Jean-Élie Demoulins de Rochefort, also a naval lieutenant;

Charles-Armand-Mathurin de la Garde, frigate lieutenant;

Jean Bassière, auxiliary officer, all serving on board said ship.

The court discharges from all charges the memory of Joseph-François Hubert Delahayrie, lieutenant serving on board said ship, who died during the course of the proceedings.

The court of inquiry considers the land and sea officers serving on board said ship to be worthy of the King's favor and the nation's esteem, as well as the crew.

The War Council unanimously praised the memory of Mr. de Marigny, captain of the ship *César*, for having fought with the utmost valor on that day, April 12, until he was mortally wounded at nine o'clock in the morning.

It also praised the conduct of Michel-Georges Laub, the second-in-command on the same ship, who took command after Mr. de Marigny's death, having fought without interruption until three and a half o'clock in the afternoon with the greatest tenacity, and having made a most valiant defense until he was forced to surrender to superior forces, having only thirty-six cannon shots of all calibers remaining, and with his sails torn to shreds and his masts damaged beyond repair. Consequently, it exonerates him from all charges.[309]

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Louis-Simon de Broutières, ensign on board the said ship, is also acquitted of all charges.

And Joseph Ruault-Duplacy, an auxiliary officer on board the said ship, The judges also commend the land and sea officers on board the said ship, and the crew, as worthy of the King's favor and the nation's esteem, for having fought with such valor and coolness, and for having made such a fine resistance.

Regarding the accusation against Pierre-Antoine de Montpéroux, captain commanding the *Dauphin-Royal*, this officer fought valiantly on the morning of the said day, April 12, with an old ship, but in the evening he was away from his post in the battle line; therefore, he is dismissed from the case and from trial.

Jean-Baptiste-Roch de Guerpel de Bar, ensign on board the said ship, is acquitted of all charges.

Jean-François, Baron d'Arros, commanding the ship *Languedoc*, the leading ship on the port side of the battle line, is acquitted of all charges.

He has suppressed and hereby suppresses all memoranda, letters, and writings insofar as they contain anything detrimental to his honor and reputation. Jean-Baptiste-François de Lavilléon, flag captain of the *Ville-de-Paris*, commanding the said ship under the orders of the admiral, is acquitted of all charges;

Pierre-René-Marie de Vaugirault de Rosnay, captain, acting as major of the army;

Jean-Baptiste de Cibon, captain, on board the said ship *Ville-de-Paris* as commissary of the army;

Jean-Louis Trédern Delezerec, lieutenant of the navy; Jean-Louis-Charles, Chevalier de Brach, lieutenant of the navy;

Jacques-Paul-Robert Delezardière, midshipman; Charles de Blois, also a midshipman;

François-Marie du Bouexic, also a midshipman;

And Joseph de Tanouarn, also a midshipman, all aboard the ship *Ville-de-Paris*.

Claude de Mithon, captain, commanding the ship *La Couronne*, and a sailor serving on the *Ville-de-Paris* in the port side of the battle line (reverse order), are hereby cleared of all charges.[310]

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Ordered the removal and permanently removes all memoranda, letters and writings insofar as they contain anything detrimental to his honor and reputation. Discharges from all charges Armand le Gardeur de Tilly, captain, commanding the ship *L'Éveillé*.

Discharges from all charges Louis de Rigaud, Count of Vaudreuil, rear admiral, commanding the *Sceptre*.

The Court Martial expresses its regrets at the loss of Baron d'Escars, captain, commanding the ship *Le Glorieux*, and commends his memory, having fought valiantly until nine o'clock in the morning of the said 12th of April, when he was killed, having successively been engaged by the English admiral and his rear squadron, who left his ship without any masts. Discharges from all charges Jean-Honoré de Trogoff de Kerlessi, lieutenant, who took command of the ship in place of Baron d'Escars on the said 12th of April.

Likewise discharges from all charges Louis-Hippolyte-Marie Vinoy de Portzamparc, midshipman,

And Charles-Paul-Léonard de Montigny, also a midshipman, both aboard the said ship.

Commends the conduct of Trogoff for his tenacity in defending the said ship. His resistance, courage, resourcefulness and determination are qualities that merit the King's favor and earn him the respect of the corps.

Likewise commends the conduct of the officers, both land and sea, who ably supported him in the defense, as well as the crew of the said ship, who fought with courage and determination, and who, for this reason, also merit the King's favor.

Discharges from all charges the memory of Louis-Augustin de Monteclerc, captain, commanding the ship *Le Diadème*, who died during the proceedings.

Discharges from all charges François-Louis-Edme-Gabriel Dumaitz de Goimpy, captain, commanding the ship *Le Destin*.

Jean-Antoine Le Bègue, captain of the ship "*Le Magnanime*," is acquitted of all charges. He is ordered to be more circumspect in his language and expressions in the future, particularly in his logbook and report to the Minister, regarding the battle of April 12th.

Charles de Médine, captain of the ship "*Le Réfléchi*"; Charles-Marie de la Grandière, captain of "*Le Conquérant*"; and Jean-Baptiste de Macarty Macteigne, captain of "*Le Magnifique*," are all acquitted of all charges.

They are commended for their bravery in the battle of April 12th, for their efficiency in executing the maneuvers of their ships, for their prompt action in rallying with the commander of their squadron, the "*Ville-de-Paris*," and for their diligence in maintaining their assigned positions aboard the "*Triomphant*."[311]

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Louis-Philippe de Rigaud, Marquis de Vaudreuil, Lieutenant General, commanding the second squadron of the King's fleet aboard the ship *Triomphant*, is hereby exonerated of all charges.

And his conduct during all the events of that day, April 12, both as commander of the said ship and as admiral commanding the second squadron, is commended.

All letters, reports, and writings containing anything detrimental to his honor and reputation are hereby suppressed. Joseph-Saturnin Mont-Cabrié de Peytes, captain of the flag-ship, in place of Chevalier du Pavillon, killed in action on that day, April 12, is also exonerated of all charges.

As is Louis Frager, Chevalier de l'Éguille, lieutenant, serving on board the said ship, acting as major of the said squadron.

The memory of Chevalier du Pavillon is praised for having fought valiantly until his death on that day. Charles de Charitte, captain of the ship *Bourgogne*, is exonerated of all charges.

And his maneuvers during the day of April 12 are commended. For Charles-Régis-Coriolis d'Espinouse, rear admiral, aboard the ship *Duc-de-Bourgogne*, having been too preoccupied in the afternoon of April 12 with the danger of losing his masts, instead of doing everything possible to remain with his squadron, the Court Martial sentences him to be summoned to the Council Chamber to be admonished in the presence of the assembled court.

Pierre Joseph-François Samson de Champmartin, captain of the flag-ship, is exonerated of all charges.

Henri-César de Castellane-Majastre, captain of the ship "*Le Marseillais*," Is commended for his zeal, his steadfastness, and his meticulous attention to detail in executing the general maneuvers of his squadron and the specific maneuvers of his own ship during the events of April 12th.

François-Hector d'Albert de Rions, captain of the ship "*Le Pluton*," is exonerated of all charges,

And his conduct during the aforementioned events is commended.

Charles-Elzéar Bourgarel de Martignan, midshipman, commanding the frigate "*L'Amazone*" in place of Mr. de Montguyot, the ship's regular commander, is exonerated of all charges.[312]

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The War Council honors the memory of said Montguyot, killed in a battle prior to April 12.

Jean-Baptiste-François de Suzannet, lieutenant of the navy, commander of the frigate *L'Aimable*, is acquitted of all charges;

François Robert, Viscount Daché, midshipman, commander of the cutter *Le Clairvoyant*, and is commended for his conduct on the day of April 12. Joachim de Roquart, lieutenant of the navy, commander of the frigate *La Galathée*, is acquitted of all charges;

Louis-Jean-Marie, Baron de Paroy, lieutenant of the navy, commander of the corvette *La Cérès*.

The War Council has praised and continues to praise the memory of Viscount de Mortemart, commander of the frigate *Le Richemond*, who was of immense service on that day, April 12, by his bold and distinguished maneuver in taking the *Glorieux* in tow, which he held onto resolutely under enemy fire, only abandoning it after repeated orders from Mr. de Trogoff, commander of the *Glorieux*, who saw that this frigate was about to be surrounded.

This bold and valiant action justifies the regrets the corps feels at having lost this brave soldier. Joseph-Louis de Canillac, serving as second lieutenant on said frigate, is acquitted of all charges. On the remainder of the parties' claims, they are dismissed from the case and the proceedings.

Although the *Zélé* was the primary cause of the battle, this ship was not among those whose conduct had been referred to the council for review. The same was true of the frigate detached from the fleet to escort the *Zélé* to Guadeloupe. However, the *Astrée* became embroiled in the heated discussions that arose from the battle of Dominica. Count de Grasse criticized the maneuver of this frigate and criticized it very harshly. He claimed that his captain had wasted precious time by insisting that the *Zélé*, whose boats had been damaged when its rigging fell, launch a lifeboat. Count de Grasse was mistaken; it was the frigate, not the warship, that had launched the lifeboat.[313]

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The *Astrée* passed before 2:15 in the afternoon the stern of the flagship, and then set course at five o'clock.[1] Given the weather and sea conditions, and also the relative positions of the two fleets, it does not seem that the *Astrée* maneuvered with any particular speed. La Pérouse, for it was the illustrious La Pérouse who commanded the *Astrée*, rejected the reproaches made against him by the Count of Grasse, stating that he had received orders to assist a ship that was downwind, without being informed of the nature of the services he was expected to provide. The darkness of the night had prevented him from seeing that the *Zélé* was dismasted, so he had approached the stern of that ship to find out what was expected of him. This caused a delay for which he did not believe he should be held responsible. Whatever the outcome of this incident, we will recall that, even if the Count of Grasse had resumed his course north at half past six, the *Zélé* would still have continued its journey safely to Guadeloupe. The Count of Grasse wrote to the minister to protest against the decision of the court-martial and to request a new panel of judges. This general officer entertained the most absurd illusions about his own situation and the authority he might still have in Paris. The matter was closed, and the government did not wish to reopen it. Furthermore, the reasoned opinion issued by the council on the conduct of each of the general officers and captains on April 12 had demonstrated the injustice of the accusations made by the Count of Grasse against his fleet.

1. This is based on the testimonies of Messrs. Brueys d'Aigallier and de Rogues, lieutenants of the navy, were aboard ship; the former on the *Zélé*, and the latter on the *Astrée*, which passed the *Zélé* at approximately 2:45 in the night of April 11 to 12, astern of the ship. The frigate hailed the ship and ordered it to launch a boat so that a towline could be passed over. The ship replied that its situation did not allow it to launch a boat, whereupon the frigate stopped and drifted downwind, and sent a boat to the *Zélé*. After the frigate had drifted downwind, it tacked to windward to retrieve its boat, which was holding the towline to the ship. The *Astrée* took the *Zélé* in tow at 4:45, and at 5:00 it set course for its destination.[314]

The King and the Minister of the Navy deeply regretted the measures taken against these honorable officers who, as a reward for their bravery and devotion, had received only imprisonment and ill-treatment. Marshal de Castries felt it necessary to remind the Count de Grasse of the gravity of his situation. He wrote to him on June 2nd: “The King has read, Sir, the letter in which you pre-emptively object to the members of the court-martial and beg His Majesty to judge you Himself. His Majesty did not approve the reasons for the pre-emptive appeal you made against the final judgment rendered by the court-martial convened in Lorient, and He has not been able to approve them any more since this judgment has been made public. His Majesty has had all the charges contained in the letters and memoranda that you have circulated throughout Europe and which you have leveled against the naval fleet under your command examined, and He has examined them Himself with the greatest attention. He has seen that all the accusations of disobedience to signals and of abandoning the flagship on April 12, 1782, were refuted by the court-martial's verdict, and that the loss of the battle could not be attributed to the specific errors that were committed. It follows from this judgment that you have allowed yourself to compromise, through unfounded accusations, the reputation of several officers, in order to justify yourself in public opinion for an unfortunate event for which you might perhaps have found an excuse in the inferiority of your forces, in the uncertainty of the outcome of the battle, and in circumstances that were beyond your control.” His Majesty is willing to assume that you did everything within your power to prevent the unfortunate events of the day, but He cannot be so lenient regarding the allegations you have unjustly made against the officers of His Navy, who have been cleared of any wrongdoing.[315]

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His Majesty, displeased with your conduct in this matter, forbids you to appear before Him. I regret having to convey His instructions to you, and I add the advice that, in the present circumstances, you should return to your province." This letter highlights the spirit of justice and impartiality that characterized Marshal de Castries' administration. Furthermore, it is significant because it shows the King and his minister resolutely adhering to the opinion of the War Council.

During his command, the Count de Grasse had achieved notable victories over the enemy. The surrender of Cornwallis' army, which secured American independence, was partly his achievement. Defeated at the Battle of Dominica, he had upheld his honor by defending the ship bearing his flag with an energy that was difficult to surpass. His personal courage on that unfortunate day was beyond praise. In return for the services he had rendered, France owed him forgiveness for the mistakes he had made on April 12th. For his part, after the loss at Dominica, he was strictly obligated to remain silent and live in retirement. Instead of accepting this role, the only one that suited him, he indulged in futile and unjust recriminations. He failed to demonstrate, which is, after all, the prerogative of very few men, dignity in adversity.

VI

Of the twenty-five ships that comprised the French fleet, after the surrender of the *Ville-de-Paris*, eleven were gathered the following morning near the *Triomphant*. The Marquis de Vaudreuil dispatched the *Conquérant* to Cap-Français to carry the news of the Battle of Dominica, and he cruised along the coast of Saint-Domingue for several days.[316]

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He wanted to wait for any of our ships that might be heading independently towards Cap-Français, the rendezvous point assigned to the fleet in case of separation. He arrived at this anchorage on the 25th with the *Triomphant*, the *Bourgogne*, the *Réfléchi*, the *Magnanime*, the *Destin*, the *Diadème*, the *Sceptre*, the *Languedoc*, the *Dauphin Royal*, the *Citoyen*, the *Brave*, the *Scipion*, the *Northumberland*, the *Palmier*, the *Souverain* and the *Neptune*. The convoy, composed of one hundred and twenty-three ships, and the vessels *Duc-de-Bourgogne*, *Couronne* and *Magnifique* were at anchor. The *Sagittaire* and the *Experiment*, the frigates *La Railleuse*, *L'Engageante*, the *Richmond* and nine Spanish ships, which had set sail on the 22nd to intercept our ships, returned a few days later. Five ships, the *Auguste*, carrying the flag of Rear Admiral de Bougainville, the *Éveillé*, the *Hercule*, the *Marseillais* and the *Pluton*, rejoined the fleet in May, after having repaired their damage at Curaçao.

The English, too badly damaged on April 12th to pursue us, remained at anchor overnight at the scene of the battle. Calm weather kept them near Guadeloupe for three days. Vice-Admiral Samuel Hood departed first with ten ships, chosen from those that had suffered the least damage. He had orders to patrol off Cape Tiburon, on the coast of Saint-Domingue, until the arrival of the commander-in-chief. Rodney assumed that this detachment could intercept some of the stragglers from the French fleet. For his part, he wanted, before leaving, to make sure that the main body of our forces had not put in at the Leeward Islands. As soon as he had this confirmation, he set sail to rejoin his lieutenant. The latter, having arrived at the Mona Passage[1] on April 19, spotted five ships and ordered his men to pursue them.

1. The Mona Passage separates Hispaniola (now Haiti and the Dominican Republic) from Puerto Rico.[317]

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The ships the British encountered were the vessels *Cato* and *Jason*, and the frigates *Astree*, *Aimable*, and *Ceres*, which had sailed from Guadeloupe a few days earlier. Surrounded by superior forces, the *Cato* and *Jason* were forced to surrender. Of the three frigates, only the *Astree* managed to escape the enemy's pursuit.[1] After joining forces with Hood, Rodney led his fleet to Jamaica, arriving there at the end of April.

The losses suffered by the French at the Battle of Dominica and the presence of Rodney's fleet in Jamaica led the squadron commanders, Don Solano and the Marquis de Vaudreuil, to abandon their planned expedition against the island. However, the British victory did not paralyze the allied forces. The Marquis de Vaudreuil gathered the merchant ships scattered in the various ports of Saint-Domingue at Cap-Français. He dispatched them to Europe in two convoys, each comprising more than one hundred vessels, under strong escort. A division, consisting of the ship *Sceptre*, commanded by La Pérouse, and the frigates *Astree* and *Engageante*, commanded by Lieutenants de Langle and de la Jaille, was sent to Hudson Bay to destroy the British settlements there.[2] On July 4, the French and Spanish fleets set sail from the harbor of Cap-Français. After ensuring Don Solano's safe arrival in Havana, the Marquis de Vaudreuil continued his voyage to North America with thirteen ships. In the first days of August, he appeared off the coast of the United States, where his unexpected presence aroused the greatest fears among the enemy. The British generals believed that the French and Americans were acting in concert, and they concentrated troops around New York.

1. This event placed a serious burden of responsibility on Captain de Framond of the ship *Caton*, who commanded the division by virtue of his seniority. The route he had chosen was not the one specified in his orders. The minister ordered that this officer be removed from the navy's service list.

2. Despite very great difficulties, this expedition was led by La Pérouse to complete success. It inflicted considerable losses on the British.[318]

The Marquis de Vaudreuil anchored off Boston on August 10th to resupply his squadron and carry out repairs that the insufficient resources of Cape Breton had prevented him from undertaking. Our arrival in Nantasket Roads was marked by an unfortunate event. The *Magnifique*, badly steered by its pilot, ran aground; the equipment was saved, but the ship could not be refloated. Wishing to express public gratitude to France, Congress offered the King the 74-gun ship *América*. This was the first ship built in the shipyards of the new Republic.

The depredations committed at Saint-Eustache had aroused general disapproval in England. Admiral Pigot, appointed to replace Rodney, was at sea when the news of the battle of Dominica reached London. The Admiralty hastily dispatched a fast-sailing ship to recall him. In case he could not reach this admiral in time, the captain of this vessel carried a letter giving Rodney the choice of returning to England or remaining in command of his fleet. When this aviso joined the British fleet, Admiral Rodney had already handed over command to his successor and had left for Europe. During their stay in Jamaica, the English, busy repairing their ships, did not interfere with our movements. They made no attempt either to attack our possessions or to reconquer the colonies we had seized. Rodney's victory freed Jamaica from any threat, which was, it must be acknowledged, a very important point; but from an offensive standpoint, it did not have any directly favorable consequences for the enemy. When Admiral Pigot set sail again, the Marquis de Vaudreuil had already left Saint-Domingue some time earlier.[319]

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The British followed us along the coasts of North America, and their squadron anchored at New York on September 4, 1782.[1]

As soon as our squadron was ready to set sail, it proceeded to Puerto Cabello, where the Marquis de Vaudreuil and Don Solano had agreed to rendezvous. Our allies did not appear at the rendezvous, which had been agreed upon in the war council held at Cap-Français a few months earlier. The governor-general of Cuba had not permitted the Spanish admiral to leave the island before the arrival of a squadron, which was then expected from Europe. The Marquis de Vaudreuil, informed of this situation, sailed for Saint-Domingue.

The defeat suffered by Count de Grasse did not alter the plans of France and Spain regarding Jamaica. These two powers decided that they would attempt this undertaking at the beginning of 1783. The naval forces maintained by Great Britain amounted to approximately one hundred ships.

1. The inaction of the British allowed the Marquis de Vaudreuil to make the following observations in one of his reports: If the French had not offered the most vigorous resistance, would the British army have taken so much time to regroup in Jamaica? Would it not have come to blockade us at Cap-Français? Yet it could not prevent the Hudson Bay expedition, the dispatch of troops to the Windward Islands, the gathering of goods in the various ports of Saint-Domingue, or the departure of two convoys of more than one hundred ships each. The Spaniards returned to Havana without being disturbed; our ships patrolled between Cap-Français and Port-au-Prince; We then patrolled off the coast of New England before they were even able to reach that area, and they only went to New York to complete their repairs. The convoys from Jamaica could not sail for Europe as soon as ours. Of all the ships they captured from us, the Ardent, upon leaving Jamaica, was in such a poor state that it had to return, on the verge of sinking; all the others perished at sea, at the first sign of bad weather. Did the English derive any advantage from their victory? They cannot be accused of inactivity, nor of being led by incompetent or unenterprising commanders. But the French, undeterred by their setbacks, worked with such speed that they were able to anticipate the English in every respect, as if they had not suffered any defeat. These are the same officers, gentlemen, who are awaiting a judgment that will restore their tarnished honor."[320]

After deducting the ships needed to protect its convoys, and those stationed in India and the English Channel, England had forty ships available to defend its West Indian colonies. We had twenty-two ships in the Caribbean, and the Spanish had twelve at Havana. The courts of Versailles and Madrid agreed to send thirty ships to Saint-Domingue at the end of December—fifteen French and fifteen Spanish—detachment from the combined fleet assembled at Cadiz. The implementation of these measures would allow us to launch the expedition against Jamaica with a fleet of at least sixty ships.[321]

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BOOK XI

Conquest of Minorca. - The French and Spanish naval forces unite at Cadiz. - The Court of Madrid plans an attack on Gibraltar by land and sea. - Capture of the ship "*Pégase*". - The allies seize an English convoy. - The combined fleet appears in the English Channel. Pursuit of the English squadron. - Howe sails out to resupply Gibraltar. - The Spaniards build ten floating batteries in Algeciras, according to plans by a French engineer, Colonel d'Arçon. - Attack on Gibraltar, September 13. - The Spaniards evacuate the floating batteries and set them on fire. - Gallant conduct of an English officer, Captain Curtis. - Observations on the events of September 13. - Arrival of the English squadron in the Strait. - Admiral Howe succeeds in resupplying Gibraltar. - Engagement of October 20. - The allies return to Cadiz. - The English continue their voyage to Portsmouth.

I

At the beginning of 1782, the Spaniards completed the conquest of Minorca. Fort St. Philip, the only remaining British stronghold, surrendered on February 4. The garrison, reduced to a handful of men, surrendered as prisoners of war. The Spanish court, still determined to retake Gibraltar, resolved to attack the fortress by land and sea. The troops that had taken part in the Minorca expedition were transported to the Saint-Roch camp. Charles III, hoping that the Duke of Crillon would be as successful in this second undertaking as in the first, placed this general in command of the besieging army. France, yielding to Spain's requests, sent Lieutenant General de Guichen to Cadiz with a squadron to join Cordova. Given the considerable naval forces that the Allies had in the European seas, the British maintained a sufficient number of ships along their coastlines to defend against any further invasion attempt.[322]

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These ships were divided into several squadrons. One of them blockaded the Dutch in Texel, and the others successively sailed out to attack our merchant shipping and protect that of Great Britain.

On April 20, Vice-Admiral Barrington, who had left Portsmouth eight days earlier with twelve ships, sighted a large number of sails to the southwest of Ushant. It was one of our convoys bound for India, escorted by the 74-gun ships *Le Pégase* and *Le Protecteur*. These two ships tacked to starboard, with the wind from the southeast, heading towards Ushant, which was not far away. At 7:30 in the evening, the enemy had gained considerably on them. At 8:30, *Le Pégase*, which was quite a distance behind *Le Protecteur*, was being closely pursued by an English ship. Losing all hope of reaching the Iroise Channel before being overtaken, its captain, Captain de Silans, altered course, sailing with the wind astern, which seemed to him the most favorable maneuver to escape the enemy. Around midnight, the 80-gun *Foudroyant* arrived within close range of *Le Pégase*. A very fierce battle immediately ensued between these two ships. At 2:00 in the morning, Captain de Silans maneuvered to board his adversary. He succeeded in hooking the *Foudroyant's* bowsprit with his rigging, but the two ships separated almost immediately. At 3:00, *Le Pégase*, dismasted and with ninety men killed or wounded, surrendered. The *Foudroyant* had three wounded men and some minor damage to its rigging. The ship *L'Actionnaire*, armed as a store ship, and twelve of the eighteen transports that made up the convoy, fell into the hands of the English. This event was all the more unfortunate because most of the ships captured by Admiral Kempenfeldt on December 14, 1781, were bound for India.

The capture of the *Pégase* caused considerable consternation in France. The encounters that had taken place since the beginning of the war, involving individual ships, had most often resulted in victories for the French navy.[323]

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In the engagements between the *Belle-Poule* and the *Arethusa*, and between the *Surveillante* and the *Quebec*[1], the courage of the crews and the skill of the captains shone brilliantly. When the tide of battle turned against us, our ships, before being captured, always inflicted very serious losses on the enemy. The success of the *Foudroyant*, under the circumstances we have described, was all the more difficult to understand, given that M. de Silans enjoyed a very good reputation. This officer, having been exchanged very quickly, appeared before a court-martial convened in Brest on October 22 of the same year, presided over by Lieutenant General de Breugnon. The officer who acted as the King's prosecutor, Captain of the Fleet de Fautras, concluded the extremely harsh indictment he delivered against the captain of the *Pégase* by saying: "We request, on behalf of the King, that the Chevalier de Silans be dismissed from the naval service, that his name be removed from the lists and registers of naval officers, that he be declared ineligible to ever serve the King in his navy, and that he be stripped of all honors and privileges granted to members of this corps, and that he be further sentenced to imprisonment for twenty years in such fortress, citadel, castle, or other place as His Majesty may deem fit."[2]

1. The engagement between the *Surveillante* and the *Quebec* is one of the most glorious actions of this war. The officers and crews of both nations displayed the utmost bravery in this affair. After a close-range engagement that lasted several hours, the *Quebec* exploded. Captain Farmer perished in the explosion of his ship. Du Couëdic, the valiant captain of the *Surveillante*, died a few months later from wounds received during the battle.

2. Chevalier de Fautras also requested that Mr. de Cambis, the second officer on the ship, be sentenced to one year in prison, with a ban on holding any position in the naval service until His Majesty saw fit to lift this ban. Mr. de Cambis was acquitted.[324]

The court did not accept the conclusions of the King's prosecutor. The captain of the *Pégase* was suspended "from all duties in the naval service, until it pleased His Majesty to lift this suspension."[1]

This relatively lenient sentence offered a striking contrast to the seriousness of the event that had brought Mr. de Silans before the court-martial. The opinion of one of the judges, Captain de la Vaultière, which we reproduce here, will provide an explanation for this apparent leniency: "I do not believe that Mr. de Silans is blameworthy in any way, except for the excessive zeal or ambition that led him to accept command of a ship that was undermanned, both with sailors and officers, since a nineteen-year-old midshipman was in command of the first battery."

1. The grounds for the judgment, which we reproduce below, detail the navigational errors that the court found the captain of the *Pégase* guilty of. The court-martial declared and declares the aforementioned Chevalier de Silans duly found guilty, firstly: of allowing himself to be approached within pistol range, before using his main guns, even though the *Foudroyant* had remained within range for more than four hours; a maneuver which, besides depriving the *Pégase* of its advantages, forced it to begin the battle in a disadvantageous position, with its adversary close behind on the starboard side. Secondly, for having not only begun and continued the battle without deploying grappling hooks or manning the gunwales and quarter-decks for musketry fire, but even, at a time when he had already suffered the loss of approximately one-seventh of his crew and several damages to his ship, attempted to board the enemy vessel, the *Foudroyant*, without any clear plan and without any preparation for such an attack; for having, in this endeavor, indiscriminately brought all sorts of personnel on deck, thus jeopardizing the safety of his ship, either by recklessly exposing them to danger without any apparent advantage, or by leaving the gun decks and interior of the ship undefended by removing the personnel necessary to man them; finally, for not having strictly adhered to the regulations for the preservation of his ship and the honor of the King's flag, having, on the contrary, without being reduced to the last extremity, lowered his flag and surrendered the *Pégase* to the *Foudroyant* at a time when the enemy had not yet resumed the action after the attempted boarding, and without any of the three other ships of the English squadron, which had approached, having launched an attack. For these reasons, the court-martial has condemned and does hereby condemn the aforementioned Chevalier de Silans to be suspended from all duties in the naval service, until such time as His Majesty sees fit to lift this suspension.[325]

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Consequently, it seems to me that, instead of capturing a much superior ship, which he would undoubtedly have succeeded in doing with the boldness of his maneuvers and a more experienced crew, he has done nothing to enhance the glory of the French flag, and he has compromised his own reputation. It is on this basis that I express my disapproval of him, and my opinion is that he should be dismissed.[1]" The *Pégase* had been put to sea on April 11, although at that time it was in a very poor state of readiness. M. de Silans had taken command on the 13th, and the ship had sailed from Brest on the 19th. The council had obtained evidence that, in terms of personnel, this ship was in a deplorable state, rather than merely a poor one. It was noted that a very young midshipman was in command of the lower gun deck. Since sailors and gunners were lacking in the port of Brest, the crew had been supplemented with men who had never been to sea. The *Pégase* had been sent out with such haste that the battle stations had not even been assigned when it set sail. Now, it had fought on the 20th, that is, the day after its departure, against a ship that had been fully equipped for some time and which was commanded by one of the best officers in the British navy. The unfortunate outcome of this encounter was the natural consequence of the situation of the two ships. The members of the council, while differing in their assessment of the maneuvers before and during the battle, agreed that the commander of the *Pégase* had gravely neglected his duty by not informing higher authority of the state of his ship. The prosecution itself concurred with this opinion. Captain Fautras had strongly criticized Mr. de Silans for not having raised with his superiors the concerns he had regarding the composition of his crew.[2]

1. At that time, judges expressed their opinions in writing.

2. For failing to make appropriate representations regarding the shortcomings he perceived in the composition of the crew. Statement by Mr. de Fautras.[326]

The discussions had clearly highlighted the degree of responsibility borne by the commander of the port of Brest in the unfortunate event of April 20. The lesson learned from this incident has not lost its relevance. Ships sent to sea must be capable, from the very day of their departure, of upholding the honor of the flag.

This observation should be emphasized all the more, since, most often, the officers tasked with preparing the naval forces are not the ones who command them. One can therefore fear that they might succumb to the temptation to act quickly, without paying sufficient attention to doing things properly.

On June 4, thirty-two ships, including five French vessels, sailed out of Cadiz and headed north. On the 25th, Don Luis de Cordova had the good fortune to encounter a convoy bound from England to Canada, escorted by a ship, two frigates, and a sloop. The warships managed to escape, but eighteen richly laden merchant ships fell into our hands. Due to the numerical superiority of the allied forces, the English adopted a defensive strategy. However, the British Admiralty wanted to ensure the safe arrival of a valuable convoy expected from Jamaica. Admiral Howe, entrusted with this mission, positioned himself to intercept this convoy, keeping to the west of the combined fleet. He managed to reach it and escorted it safely into Irish ports. In the first days of July, Lamotte-Picquet joined the combined fleet with eight ships. This general officer took command of a light squadron, composed of the *Invincible*, on which his flag was flying, the *Robuste*, the *Guerrier*, the *Protecteur*, and the Spanish ships *Saint-Vincent*, *Arrogante*, *Santa-Ysabel*, and *Santo-Ysidoro*.[327]

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The Franco-Spanish fleet was cruising twenty leagues west-south-west of Ushant, when, on July 12, at five o'clock in the morning, the frigates reported a squadron at a considerable distance to the northeast. Cordova gave the signal to pursue in free formation. Shortly afterwards, the leading ships reported that they could see twenty-two vessels.

Orders were given to attack as soon as they were within cannon range. The enemy's superior speed rendered all these preparations useless. Lamotte-Picquet, with the light squadron, approached the English, but the main body of the combined fleet remained behind. At six o'clock in the evening, the commander-in-chief, recognizing the impossibility of reaching the English, hoisted the recall signal.[1] At the end of July, Don Luis de Cordova set sail for Cadiz. The Dutch squadron had left Texel, but had not dared to head towards the English Channel. After a short cruise in the North Sea, it returned without having inflicted any damage on the enemy. A merchant fleet of nearly four hundred ships, coming from the Baltic with a light escort, had managed to reach the ports of England without being harassed. The British government, relieved of any fear of invasion, resolved to make a vigorous effort to relieve Gibraltar. This mission was entrusted to Lord Howe, with Vice-Admirals Barrington and Milbank under his command. On September 11, the English fleet, comprising thirty-four ships, weighed anchor.

1. I have the honor to send you a summary of what happened during the pursuit we launched on the 12th of this month against the English fleet, composed of twenty-two ships of the line, including eleven three-deckers and six frigates. I did everything humanly possible to engage them, even at the risk of being crushed or captured, but all to no avail; the combined fleet was at least two leagues away from us, and a large part of it was much further. If they had moved more quickly, the entire English fleet would have been destroyed in these waters. What a day, Your Excellency, we missed because of the sluggishness of the Spanish ships! Our officers and crews were displaying the greatest eagerness, and I will regret my whole life that I could not put their enthusiasm to use. (Letter from Lamotte-Piquet, July 14, 1782, twelve miles south of Cape Lizard.)[328]

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It was escorting a fleet of transports laden with provisions and ammunition. Troops, intended to reinforce the garrison, were distributed among the ships and vessels of the convoy. Don Luis de Cordova, who had arrived in Cadiz on September 5, had left again on the 9th to proceed to Algeciras. He found eight Spanish and two French ships in that harbor, where he anchored on the 12th. These reinforcements raised the strength of the combined fleet to forty-nine ships, thirty-five Spanish and fourteen French.

Since the capture of Minorca, the Spanish nation had seen no other objective in the war with England than the conquest of Gibraltar. All the resources of the arsenals had been placed at the disposal of the new commander-in-chief. The army, assembled at the Saint-Roch camp, numbered forty thousand men, of whom ten thousand were French. Since his arrival, the Duke of Crillon had given the operations an energetic impetus. Numerous batteries of cannons and mortars had been established, and the besiegers had subjected the fortress to several bombardments. Nevertheless, the results obtained so far could be considered negligible. It is, moreover, easy to understand the difficulties of this undertaking. The Duke of Crillon was not besieging Gibraltar; the nature of the terrain did not permit it. All his efforts were directed against the northern side, not of the town, but of the rock upon which the fortress of Gibraltar stood.

II

The Rock of Gibraltar forms a peninsula, connected to the mainland by a low, sandy strip of land. Its length, from north to south, barely exceeds two miles, with an average width of less than one mile.[329]

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This peninsula ends in a cape called the Point of Europe. To the Mediterranean side, it is bordered by a sheer, vertical cliff. The town is located on the western slope. In early 1782, the town was almost entirely destroyed, but this situation had no military significance. On the mountain, at various elevations, there were fortified camps where the garrison had secure shelter. The Gibraltar peninsula forms one side of a large bay carved into the southern coast of Spain. On the western shore of the bay lies Algeciras, opposite Gibraltar. The Point of Europe is not very high, but as one moves northward, the elevation rises rapidly. At the tip of the peninsula, it reaches three to four hundred meters. The British batteries positioned at this point could deliver plunging fire on the Spanish camp. In Madrid, it was not believed that Gibraltar could be taken by attacking from the landward side. The two sieges of 1705 and 1727 had offered no hope in this regard. On the other hand, it seemed doubtful that, even by sacrificing a squadron, one could operate effectively by sea with any serious chance of success. A French officer, Colonel d'Arçon of the Engineer Corps, after carefully studying the problem, submitted to the Spanish government plans for floating batteries suitable for this purpose. These batteries, he stated, would be safe from both sinking and burning. The colonel gave his vessels very thick hulls and keels. He made them impervious to cannonballs by surrounding them with a wall of wood and cork covered with green leather. Inside this wall was a space filled with sand. At the distance from Gibraltar where he expected the floating batteries to be anchored, the cannonballs were designed to stop two feet short of the inner walls. An inclined roof, made with a sturdy frame covered with a layer of old ropes, provided protection for the batteries from the bombardment.[330]

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A system of interconnected and crisscrossing canals ran through the entire outer wall. All these canals led to a kind of reservoir, located at the top of the armored structure, into which pumps raised the water necessary for the general circulation system. These latter arrangements were intended to make the floating batteries fireproof. Colonel d'Arçon's proposals were so unconventional that they inevitably met with strong opposition. After much deliberation, the Spanish government finally decided to adopt them in February 1782. The King, who took a keen interest in military affairs, played a role in this decision.[1]

1. Colonel d'Arçon based his project on the following principles:

1° The heaviest cannons known, he stated in one of his reports, are ineffective against five feet of tightly packed, solid wood.

2° Wood that is kept constantly moist, even submerged, cannot catch fire, as proven by experiment.

3° There undoubtedly exist chemical compounds that will burn even in water and that will ignite some parts of the wood they come into contact with, but only until the compound is consumed; after which, nature takes its course, and no further spread of fire will occur on the soaked wood.

4° In warfare, one must not assume that six pieces of artillery will always silence one of our own, otherwise we must abandon the idea of using this machine. It is understood that, for this machine to be fully effective, all other conditions must be equal on both sides, particularly regarding the safety of the artillery personnel. However, in this case, the advantage of the attacking artillery would have been even greater, since it would have been able to exert its full effect on an open area where the partially demolished fortifications would have only multiplied the devastation caused by ninety mortars and three hundred cannons.

5° An assault carried out under the protection of four hundred cannons, once they have gained control of the position and all the fortifications have been destroyed, is not even an assault; it is merely a peaceful occupation. These are the axioms from which the inventor started. They are either proven facts or universally accepted truths. In one of Colonel d'Arçon's memoirs, published in Madrid on November 26, 1782, we read: "Unsinkable and fireproof floating batteries." The first of these properties was to be achieved very simply by protecting the hulls of the batteries with an extra layer of wood. Regarding fireproofness, the author stated, without any mystery or exaggeration, that it could be achieved by the usual method of keeping the wood damp, ensuring a constant circulation of water throughout all parts of the wood exposed to the heat and impact of red-hot cannonballs. The aim was to produce an artificial expansion equivalent to complete immersion of the wood. After testing, it was found that the wood fibers, always abundantly saturated with water, prevented any fire from spreading.[331]

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Instead of immediately commencing the work, the Minister of the Navy did not issue the necessary orders for the conversion of ten cargo ships into floating batteries until the end of May. While his plans were being discussed, the colonel had requested that the necessary timber for the operation be gathered. He pointed out that this timber could always be used, even if his proposals were rejected. This sound advice was not followed. In the first days of September, the floating batteries were almost completed. A first test of the continuous water spray system did not yield satisfactory results. Whether the caulking had been poorly done, or there was some defect in the construction, water leaked into the interior of the ships. The desire to begin the bombardment of Gibraltar was so strong at the Saint-Roch camp that the Duke of Crillon refused to grant the necessary time to complete the work. He decided that the floating batteries would be used in their current state. The internal pipes were plugged, and only the surface spray system was retained. This decision deprived the floating batteries of most of their military value. Colonel d'Arçon did not allow himself to become discouraged. He believed that, even under these conditions, the new vessels could still be of great service. Finally, he thought that if the first test proved unsuccessful, they would quickly be withdrawn from service. In that case, he would have the freedom to return to his original plans and the time to implement them. The Spanish navy had great confidence in the new vessels, and most of the officers vied for the honor of commanding them.[332]

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They formed a division, composed as follows: *Pastora, Talla Piedra, La Paula Prima, Rosario, San Cristobal, Principe Carlos, San Juan, Paula Secunda, Santa Anna, Dolores*. The total number of cannons amounted to one hundred and fifty-two, of twenty-six caliber, and all mounted on one side only.[1] These ten ships were placed under the command of Rear Admiral Moreno. This general officer received from the Duke of C'rillon, on the evening of September 12, the order to attack Gibraltar the following day. The Duke warned him that he had the authority to relieve him of his command if he did not obey. Rear Admiral Moreno was extremely surprised to receive this communication. He did not believe the time had come to lead his ships into battle. The preparations were not yet complete, and he had not yet established any communication with the combined fleet which had anchored in the bay that same day. Faced with the imperative instructions of the commander-in-chief, he disclaimed responsibility for the outcome and prepared to sail.

The line of fortifications on the northern front of Gibraltar, facing the Spanish army, connected to a wall that bordered the western coast of the peninsula. On this wall, fifteen feet thick, were placed, at regular intervals, batteries firing at sea level. A second line of fortifications rose above the first. Two piers, ending in heavily fortified structures, extended out to sea. The old pier, located furthest north, was about a mile and a half from the new pier. In a plan submitted to the Duke of C'rillon by the French colonel, the floating batteries were to take position to the north of the old pier. They would fire directly at the fortifications that the Saint-Roch lines would attack from the rear. The colonel had marked the location on a map of each ship.

1. Five of the floating batteries had only one gun, while the others had two guns each.[333]

Thirty gunboats and an equal number of bombarding vessels, assembled at Algeciras, were to support the attack. Finally, the ships would carry out a diversion by bombarding a point on the coast designated by the admirals. The besiegers would have had three hundred and ninety-eight cannons at their disposal, namely: one hundred and fifty-two pieces from the floating batteries, one hundred and eighty-six pieces from the land attack, thirty pieces from the gunboats, and thirty mortars from the bombarding vessels. Assuming the floating batteries anchored at the positions he had indicated, the colonel estimated that the English could only oppose us with eighty-six pieces. With a difference of three hundred and twelve cannons in our favor, he was convinced that our fire would quickly gain a very great superiority over that of the English. On September 13, at eight o'clock in the morning, with the wind from the north-northwest, the floating batteries headed towards Gibraltar. *La Pastora*, carrying the flag of Rear Admiral Moreno, anchored at about nine o'clock, off the King's Bastion, a little south of the old mole.[1] Four batteries anchored south of the flagship, and five to the north. The latter were located at the level of the old mole. The Spanish ships were on a line about one to twelve hundred meters from the shore. *La Talla Piedra*, commanded by the Prince of Nassau, and on which Colonel d'Arçon was located, was the closest to the enemy. Four hundred men, belonging to the French troops, were embarked on the floating batteries. Around ten o'clock, these opened fire on the forts of Gibraltar. The Saint-Roch lines had begun firing at eight o'clock in the morning. Whether they had not received sufficiently precise orders, or for some other reason, the Spanish captains were not occupying the positions that the French engineer had indicated in his plan of attack.

1. The King's Bastion was located at the center of the second line of fortifications. The first line, as we mentioned earlier, consisted of low-level artillery batteries positioned along the wall that bordered the western coast of the Gibraltar peninsula.[334]

Instead of concentrating north of the old mole, they had positioned themselves along a long line, the southern end of which approached the new mole. The position taken by our allies had two equally unfortunate consequences. On the one hand, the number of guns that could fire on the floating batteries increased considerably, and, on the other hand, the ships further from the old mole lost the support of the Saint-Roch lines. The complete lack of direction became apparent from the very beginning of the day. A few mortars began firing, but they almost immediately returned to Algeciras. The gunboats did not approach Gibraltar, and the combined squadron remained at anchor.[1]

The enemy's projectiles proved ineffective against the walls of the new vessels. Only the shots fired through the embrasures managed to hit the crews. For several hours, the red-hot shot caused no damage. In the afternoon, a fire broke out on board the *Pastora* and the *Talla Piedra*. Despite their efforts, the crews were unable to control it. At three o'clock, the captain of the *Talla Piedra* reduced his rate of fire, and at five o'clock he ceased firing altogether. The Prince of Nassau sent a boat to request that his ship be towed out of cannon range.[2] Receiving no assistance, he attempted to move away on his own, but he could not gather enough sailors to heave an anchor.

1. Spanish accounts state that the state of the sea prevented the gunboats from setting sail. This was not the opinion of Colonel d'Arçon, who wrote on this subject: "The sea was not too rough for the gunboats, since some of them set sail at the same time as the floating batteries and accompanied them to the Strait." It is also noteworthy that only one of the artillery pieces fired any shells on the 13th, as if to demonstrate that the others could have done the same.

2. Colonel d'Arçon states in his memoirs that there were no pre-arranged signal codes between the artillery batteries and Algésiras.[335]

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The Saint-Roch batteries ceased firing at five o'clock in the evening.[1] Leaving them alone exposed to the English fire would have been to needlessly jeopardize them. Their retreat was therefore dictated, not only by the precarious situation of the *Pastora* and *Talla Piedra*, but by the overall military situation. After the mistakes made that day, the besiegers should consider themselves fortunate that the situation had not become completely disastrous. By quickly withdrawing from the battlefield, there was nothing in the situation that could not be remedied. The position of the floating batteries and the requests for assistance from some of the captains caused great consternation in Algeciras. The instructions, ordering Rear Admiral Moreno to attack, had arrived so unexpectedly that no preparations had been made to recall the batteries. Losing all hope of withdrawing them from the fire, and fearing, on the other hand, to abandon them to the enemy, the Spanish authorities ordered them to be evacuated and burned.

At two o'clock in the morning, twelve gunboats left Gibraltar. Each carried a twenty-four or eighteen-pounder cannon on its bow. After taking up position south of the anchorage line, Captain Curtis ordered fire opened on the floating batteries. The first cannon shots produced indescribable scenes of confusion on board the Spanish vessels. The crew, composed almost entirely of soldiers borrowed from the besieging army, lacked the necessary composure to face such a situation. Among the boats that came to carry out the evacuation, some were captured, while others fled towards Algeciras.

1. D'Arçon states that ammunition ran out at five o'clock in the evening, hence the need to cease fire. He adds that the Spanish fire had been poor. As for the lines, they had suffered little damage.[336]

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One launch sank, and of the eighty people on board, only thirteen managed to reach shore. The batteries were burning, and some of the crew were still on board several of them. The English displayed, on this occasion, a degree of humanity that cannot be praised enough. Officers and sailors risked their lives to rescue these unfortunate people from certain death. An English gunboat was sunk by debris from the explosion of one of the batteries. A piece of wood pierced the boat in which Captain Curtis was located. The captain and several sailors were killed. The English rescued three hundred and fifty-seven people, among whom were twenty-nine wounded, including one officer. Two floating batteries exploded during the night, and the other eight during the following day. Such was the end of an undertaking on which Spain had placed the greatest hopes.

The English victory had all the more impact, since all of Europe had its eyes on Gibraltar. Two French princes, the Count of Artois and the Prince of Bourbon, were in the ranks of the besieging army. Finally, most of the neutral powers had sent prominent officers to the Saint-Roch camp. The Spanish government could now measure the extent of the mistake it had made by wasting precious time at the beginning of 1782.[1] If the construction of the floating batteries had been completed a few months earlier, it is likely that the Duke of Crillon would have allowed the French engineer to correct the flaws that had become apparent, after the first test, in the continuous watering system.

1. The project was approved in February 1782, but work did not begin until the end of May. The preparations were immense, and since the end of September was considered the target date, it was necessary to make up for lost time through increased expenditure and speed, and by an activity that, pushed to the extreme, could only with difficulty be reconciled with the meticulous attention to detail required. Thus, the months of June, July, and August passed in a whirlwind of activity—the transformation of ten merchant ships into floating batteries, a project that required two hundred thousand cubic feet of timber. (Report by d'Arçon)[337]

However, it is difficult to understand why the Duke of Crillon did not allow Colonel d'Arçon the time to complete his work. Was the commander of the Spanish army concerned about the advancing season, or the imminent arrival of an English squadron tasked with resupplying the fortress? Besides, the possession of ships impervious to red-hot shot was well worth some sacrifices, and the Duke of Crillon would not have risked anything by delaying the sea attack on Gibraltar. He was quite certain of finding favorable weather conditions at the end of September, and even in October, for this operation. Furthermore, the presence of the Cordova and Guichen squadrons eliminated any fear regarding the British navy. Finally, even if the floating batteries were left to their own devices, due to the distance of the Franco-Spanish fleet, they would not have been in any danger. Huddled in Algeciras, under the protection of the land, they would have defied the efforts of the expected squadron from England. Colonel d'Arçon would probably have been very happy if the enemy had wanted to conduct this experiment. It follows from the above that the Duke of Crillon, by not allowing the complete execution of the French colonel's plans, did not act according to any sound maritime or military reasoning.

The Spaniards should have used the weapon of war entrusted to them by Colonel d'Arçon with even greater care, given that since 1779 they had been searching, unsuccessfully, for a way to attack Gibraltar. This, however, was not how they understood the situation. We have seen that the Duke of Crillon, from his camp at Saint-Roch, had sent a peremptory order to Rear Admiral Moreno to attack Gibraltar. The commanders of the Spanish navy had not been consulted, and there was no coordination between the various services that were supposed to contribute to this important operation.[338]

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Finally, no preparations had been made to bring the untested ships, which were about to see action for the first time, back to Algeciras. When Captain Curtis sailed out of Gibraltar, he was able to approach the floating batteries without any risk. Twelve English gunboats completely dominated the battlefield. Meanwhile, thirty Spanish gunboats were anchored in Algeciras Bay, awaiting orders. The English had performed well, and yet they could have been even more audacious without taking any risks. If Captain Curtis had sailed out a few hours earlier, he would have captured several batteries, which he could then have taken back to Gibraltar without difficulty.

After this failure, or more precisely, after this disaster, d'Arçon's work was severely criticized. Many people declared, as often happens in such cases, that they had never had confidence in the new ships. The engineer's merit, his efforts, his perseverance in continuing his work despite all sorts of difficulties, and his role on September 13th, were all forgotten. Would the colonel have succeeded in making the floating batteries fireproof? It is difficult to say, but it is not necessary to know this to judge the conduct of the commander of the Spanish army. What was the value of the floating batteries when they were put into action? That is the question that needs to be examined. Colonel d'Arçon only left the *Talla Piedra*, on which he had boarded, around one o'clock in the morning. He recounts what happened on board this ship in one of his memoirs as follows: "The *Talla Piedra* was anchored before ten o'clock in the morning. The fire from this battery began immediately. That of the enemy, very intense and numerous, was nevertheless reduced around noon. Ours was maintained vigorously until about three o'clock in the afternoon."[339]

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The fire was progressing very slowly. It was still just the same cannonball, whose smoke was visible through the external hole and then successively through the internal joints; but this situation, easily remedied by moving away from the fire, lasted for more than six hours, and the fire itself only became uncontrollable after midnight. The nine other batteries, much less exposed to enemy fire and further from the fortress, could, a fortiori, have moved away and repaired themselves. Retreat was necessary for all of them, and it should have been carried out. This planned retreat, which was very easy to execute, and which became all the more necessary since the position was compromised and all the auxiliary elements and equipment remained in a precarious state, was not even attempted. The order was given to evacuate them and set them on fire. “At the moment when the Saint-Roch lines ceased firing, that is, at five o'clock in the evening, two batteries were quite seriously damaged, a third very slightly, and seven were intact. If the *Pastora* and the *Talla Piedra* had been withdrawn from the fire that evening, they would inevitably have been saved. It should also be noted that the resistance of the floating batteries would have been quite different if, on the one hand, they had not been spread out over such a long line, and if, on the other hand, the enemy had been forced to reserve part of its fire to counter that of the gunboats and bombarding vessels.”[1]

1. They went and positioned themselves in the center of the fortress, as if they intended to bring all the fortress artillery to bear against us. They dispersed all the floating batteries, and neglected the use of the gunboats and bombarding vessels. We found ourselves deprived of the support of the land attack, both because of the distance, the poor accuracy of the fire, and the lack of ammunition. Thus, this prodigious array of three hundred and ninety-eight cannons was reduced to sixty or seventy pieces at most, firing against the wall and therefore ineffective against the enemy's fire. Is it any wonder, then, that such a weak force, and one so stubbornly abandoned, should have yielded after five hours of combat against two hundred and eighty cannons of the fortress, which remained unscathed? Consider that we were fighting one against ten, instead of ten against one... and judge, despite the shortcomings of our own artillery, how much reason the author of the plan had to hope for success with such a powerful array of weapons. (Memoirs of d'Arçon)[340]

After this account, there can be no doubt about the military value of the floating batteries, not as they might have been if the colonel's plans had been fully implemented, but as they were on September 13.[1] Military annals offer few examples of an operation of such importance being conducted with such recklessness. We have no reason to accuse the commander of the Spanish army of having deliberately planned the failure of the batteries; but it is certain that, if that had been his intention, he would not have acted otherwise. In any case, it is fair to say that, in an undertaking requiring study, method, and expertise, the Duke of Crillon showed only impatience and thoughtlessness.

Captain Buor de la Charoulière recorded the various incidents of September 13[2] in his journal as follows: “On the 12th at noon, the army anchored in the Bay of Algeciras. On the 13th, at seven and a half in the morning, with the wind from the north-northwest, the ten floating batteries intended to breach the defenses began to set sail. The first anchored around nine o'clock, and the other nine followed successively. Their fire was quite intense. The fortress responded with fire from various batteries, firing red-hot shot at them, dropping bombs, and an immense number of grenades, which, before noon, had several times set fire to the machine on which Prince Nassau was positioned.”

1. The situation of the ten floating batteries at five o'clock in the evening raises the question of whether, in capable hands, they might not have succeeded, after one or more attacks, in reducing Gibraltar.

2. Captain Buor de la Charoulière was an officer of great merit. In 1780, he had been the senior officer on the squadron that had successfully fought against Rodney in the West Indies. The minister intended to send him to the Antilles to replace, on board the *Triomphant*, the ship captain du Pavilion, killed on April 12, 1782, in the battle of Dominica. [341]

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Each time, they had managed to extinguish the fire. However, these ships were suffering greatly from the enemy fire and losing many men, so they were constantly being replaced. For this purpose, the ships' boats were sent to them in the evening. On the 14th, at half past midnight, the situation of these batteries became more alarming. The fire was spreading rapidly, especially on board Mr. de Nassau's ship; all the boats were sent there to help evacuate not only the burning batteries, but also those that were not yet on fire. The order had been given to set fire to these latter, of which there were seven, and which had not suffered much damage from the enemy fire. At half past one, one of these ships was completely engulfed in flames. At half past two, the fire broke out on a second ship. The first one exploded at sunrise, then three others, and successively all suffered the same fate, until around five o'clock in the evening when the last one ended this dreadful scene, which undoubtedly would not have occurred if they had foreseen and used very simple means to remove them from the enemy fire when it was necessary. By a misfortune that cannot be attributed to negligence on the part of the commanders, but at least to excessive complacency, nothing had been planned. No means of retreat, no diversion by the gunboats and bombarding vessels, not even from the fortifications of the lines, whose fire ceased too early instead of being redoubled. No coordination with the ships, which could have provided assistance. But one must remain silent about such a terrible event; reflections cannot remedy anything. The French boats were of great use in saving the crews; but unfortunately, they were not numerous enough to fully accomplish this important task. Some English boats, which had come out from the mole, also saved some people. "But despite these rescue efforts, there are fears that many people perished in the fire, in addition to those killed by the gunfire in the square."[342]

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The French government showed the utmost concern for the contingent provided by our troops to man the floating batteries.[1] As for Colonel d'Arçon, he was received upon his arrival in France with the greatest distinction. The Minister of War presented him to the King, who addressed him with the most flattering words. An official expression of satisfaction was sent to him for the services he had rendered in Spain. Finally, he received a bonus of fifteen hundred livres and a pension of two thousand livres.

1. The King, Sir, was no less saddened than surprised by the unfortunate event whose news was brought by the courier who left the camp before Gibraltar on the 14th, and His Majesty, upon reading the letter you honored me with on the same day, expressed the greatest sympathy for the plight of those unfortunate people who were left to the mercy of the waves or the fury of the flames. He also saw with genuine sorrow that he had lost some officers from his troops and that others had been wounded. I must inform you that it is his intention to show these latter his benevolence, and if some are, because of their wounds, unable to serve, he will grant them their full pay for their retirement. You will kindly, Sir, send me details that will inform me of the merits and misfortunes of each of them. Regarding the soldiers who served on the floating batteries, the testimony you give of the manner in which they served is sufficient reason to grant them, as you request, compensation for the losses they suffered. Prince of Nassau has, on this occasion, fully justified the high opinion that had already been formed of his courage and intelligence; "He has earned further merit in the eyes of His Majesty, who is fully aware of his actions." (Letter of September 29 from the Marquis de Ségur, Minister of War, to Baron de Falckenhayn, commander of the French corps.)

Baron d'Arnfeldt, a captain in the Royal Swedish Regiment of German Infantry, was the last man to leave the *Talla Piedra* fort before it exploded. He was introduced to the Count of Artois, who granted him a pension of six hundred livres.[343]

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III

Whether the Duke of Crillon had a plan to capture Gibraltar, or whether he wanted to soften the blow that the news of the disaster of September 13 would inflict on his sovereign, he added, in reporting on the events, that he would continue the siege.[1] His confidence, if he truly had any in the means he intended to use, did not last long. A few days later, yielding to the objections raised by his senior officers, he abandoned this plan. The main body of the army established itself in the surrounding area, and only the troops deemed necessary to defend the Saint-Roch lines were left in the camp.[2] Spain now had no other way to take Gibraltar than by starving it into submission. To carry out this attempt successfully, it was necessary to maintain, on the sea side, such a tight blockade that the fortress would receive no reinforcements. Circumstances seemed favorable for carrying out this task, which the Spanish navy had attempted several times, but had not yet succeeded in accomplishing.

1. Upon learning that the continuation of the siege of Gibraltar was being discussed, the Count of Vergennes wrote to the Count of Montmorin, our ambassador in Madrid: "We are no less alarmed than you were, sir, when you heard the King of Spain say: 'The capture of Gibraltar is only delayed; M. de Crillon has a sure way of taking it, and he is acting accordingly.' What a disastrous blindness! How is it possible that, after the disastrous experience we have just had, one should persist in attempting a second one which will not have a different outcome and which will have an even more disastrous result? M. d'Arçon's plan had a plausible appearance, his method was novel and could promise success. One is therefore excusable for having attempted it, but would one be excusable for now embarking on projects that are almost certainly more futile than the one that has just failed?" I am not familiar with the plan of Count de Crillon, but judging from what is known of his character, it is very likely that it is at least somewhat fanciful.

2. Following the unfortunate incident with the floating batteries, the Duke de Crillon felt it necessary to maintain hope for the continuation of the siege and to revive an old plan he had submitted to the court in Madrid, the execution of which, in his opinion, would have led to the swift surrender of the fortress. This plan, having been examined by the Spanish general officers and the most knowledgeable engineers, appeared, as you have been informed, to be impracticable and could not be implemented for at least two months. Furthermore, none of these engineers were convinced that it could contribute to the surrender of the fortress, which everyone still considers impregnable by land. All these considerations having weighed on the mind of the Duke de Crillon, this general finally decided to put his troops into winter quarters and to propose to the court in Madrid only the preservation of the fortress and the defense of the lines during the winter. Indeed, from the letters he entrusted to me, I see that he no longer hesitates to acknowledge the impossibility of taking this fortress by land." (Letter from the commander of the French corps to the Minister of War)[344]

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The fleet anchored at Algeciras, including the division of Lieutenant General de Guichen, comprised forty-eight ships of the line, while the squadron expected in the Strait had only thirty-four. Admiral Howe had encountered contrary winds upon leaving the English Channel, and the beginning of his voyage had been very slow. The British Admiralty, as a measure of extreme prudence, had dispatched vessels to various points along the Portuguese coast. These ships were to sail successively and proceed to meet the English fleet, in order to inform the admiral of events that had occurred in the Bay of Gibraltar since his departure from Portsmouth. Lord Howe thus learned of the defeat suffered by the allies on September 13, the strength of the combined squadron, and its presence at anchor in Algeciras. This squadron, since the beginning of October, had been ready to sail at the first news of the approach of the English. On the 10th, a strong gust of wind from the southwest suddenly blew up. Several ships dragged their anchors, and some collided. The *San Pablo* and the frigate Crescent weighed anchor and entered the Mediterranean. One ship ran aground on the Point of Orange, near Algeciras. The *Saint-Michel*, a 70-gun ship, carrying the flag of Rear Admiral Moreno, ran aground during the night off Gibraltar.[345]

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Vigorously bombarded at dawn, it was forced to surrender. The guns of Saint-Roch then fired on this vessel, but they did not inflict any serious damage. As soon as the weather permitted, Captain Curtis brought the *Saint-Michel* back to Gibraltar. On the same day that this event occurred, which gave the English a line-of-battle ship and six hundred and fifty prisoners, Lord Howe appeared at the entrance to the Strait. The strong south-westerly wind of the previous day had been replaced by a very light northerly breeze. Four transports and one line-of-battle ship, the *Panthère*, managed to reach Gibraltar. The other ships in the convoy and the squadron were carried into the Mediterranean by the currents. The calm weather in the Bay of Algeciras prevented the allies from setting sail. On October 13, the combined fleet weighed anchor with a light west-north-west breeze, and crossed the Strait.

Lord Howe's position presented serious difficulties. The English squadron consisted of only thirty-three ships, and, moreover, it was burdened by a considerable convoy.[1] Finally, between it and Gibraltar was the combined fleet, which numbered forty-six ships.[2] Our role was clearly to maintain this position, so that Lord Howe would be unable to reach his destination without engaging in battle. We had even more reason to act in this way, since most of our ships were not copper-sheathed and were slow. Lieutenant General de Cordova, very concerned about the fate of the ship and the frigate that had drifted away during the night of October 10, sailed out to sea. The following morning, there were no ships on the horizon, but, in the afternoon, the English were sighted to the south of our fleet. Thus, on the evening of the 14th, Admiral Howe had maneuvered so skillfully that he was closer to the entrance of the strait than we were.[3]

1. The 34th, the *Panthère*, which was at Gibraltar.

2. The *San Pablo*, which was in the Mediterranean, and the *Saint-Michel*, which had been captured by the British.

3. Given the Fleet’s slow rate of advance, it would be more advantageous to position ourselves near the strait, waiting for the enemy and engaging them as they approach, rather than pursuing them out at sea, since, with their superior speed, they will easily be able to evade pursuit. The English will be careful to stay within sight of land, and their fleet, with the first favorable winds from the east, will sail along the coast. (Journal of the Campaign of the Squadron under the command of Lieutenant General de Guichen, kept by Captain Buor de la Charoulière.)[346]

In the evening, the breeze died down, the weather became hazy, and the two squadrons lost sight of each other.

On the 16th, the winds shifted to the east and freshened rapidly. The combined fleet, after remaining at anchor for part of the night of the 17th, headed towards the strait on the 18th. The following morning, the English were sighted off the bay of Gibraltar. As soon as the winds had shifted to the east, Admiral Howe had hastened to set sail. On the 18th, he entered the strait, and on the same day his convoy anchored under the guns of Gibraltar. The troops intended to reinforce the garrison were immediately disembarked. General Elliot having requested additional ammunition, fifteen hundred barrels of powder, taken from the ships' stores, were landed. When the allies appeared on the 19th, Lord Howe, having completed his operation, sailed westward. He entered the Atlantic on the same day, followed by the combined fleet. The following day, October 20, the breeze having shifted to the north, the allies found themselves to windward of the English. The fleet was ordered to form line of battle and to sail towards the enemy. Don Luis de Cordova signaled to approach the English ships to within two cables' length. At sunset, the two fleets were no longer very far apart. Lieutenant General de Lamotte-Picquet, whose flag was flying on the *Invincible*, took the lead of the line. When he was at the prescribed distance from the leading ship of the English squadron, he opened fire. The action began on a very clear, moonlit night. The two squadrons were arranged in the following order:[347]

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ESCADRE COMBINÉE.

Noms des bâtiments.	Nombre de canons.	Noms des capitaines.
Invincible	110	De Rivière. Lamotte-Picquet, lieut. général.
Guerrier	74	Duplessis-Parscau.
Dictateur	74	De Laclue.
Robuste	74	De Nieuil.
San Isidro	70	Alvaro Lopez.
Suffisant	74	De Castellet.
Guerrero	70	.....
Arrogante	70	Lopez Carizosa.
Santa Elizabeth	70	.....
San Laurent	70	.....
Zodiaque	74	De Langan-Boisfévrier.
Rayo	70	Don Antonio. Posada.
Firme	70	Don Atanazia Veranda.
Terrible	70	Don Francisco Winthuisen.
San Vicente	76	Don Ignacio Ponce de Léon.
Royal-Louis	110	De Verdun de la Crenne. De Beausset, chef d'escadre.
San Joaquim	70	Don Carlos de Torres.
Castilla	64	Don Juan Quindos.
San Juan Baptista	70	Don Francisco Idiaques.
San Justo	70	Bascomorales.
Vencedor	70	Josef Castejou.
España	64	Francisco Velasquez.
Galicia	70	Juan Clavigero.
Sério	70	Filip Gonzales.
Triomphante	76	.....
Brillante	70	Oustares.
Septentrion	60	Juan Landecho.
Majestueux	110	Bruni d'Entrecasteaux. De Rochechouart, lieutenant général.
Indien	64	De Laubepin.
San Raphael	70	.....
Santa Trinidad	112	Daioz. Luis Cordova.
Bretagne	110	De Dampierre.
Actif	74	Cillart de Suville.
Purissima Concepcion	110	Ozorno y Fumes. Juan Bonnet.
Terrible	110	De Saint-Rivenl. De Guichen, lieutenant général.
San Fernando	80	Angulo. Miguel Gaston.
Bien-Aimé	74	De Cacqueray.
San Miguel	70	Juan Moreno.
Atlante	70	Diego Quevedo.
San Pablo	70	Luiz Muñoz.
San Eugenio	70	.....

Noms des bâtiments.	Nombre de canons.	Noms des capitaines.
Angel	70	Jacintho Serano.
Santa Isabel	70	De Médina.
San Damaso	70	Antonio Ozorno.
Africa	70	De Cazeres,
Oriente	70	Domingo Perler.

ESCADRE ANGLAISE.

Noms des bâtiments.	Nombre de canons.	Noms des capitaines.
Goliath	82	Hyde Parker, junior.
Ganges	82	Fielding.
Royal William	84	Allen.
Britannia	110	Hill. Barrington, vice-amiral.
Atlas	108	Collins.
Panther	60	Simonton.
Foudroyant	84	Jervis.
Edgar	82	Hotham, commodore.
Polyphemus	72	Finch.
Suffolk	82	Home.
Vigilant	72	Douglas.
Courageux	82	Mulgrave.
Crown	72	Reeves.
Alexander	82	Longford.
Sampson	72	Harvey.
Royal Princess	108	Faulknor.
Victory	110	Leweson Gover Duncan. Howe, amiral.
Bleinheim	108	Duncan.
Asia	72	Bligh.
Egmont	82	Ferguson.
Queen	108	Dornet. Samuel Hood, contre-amiral.
Bellona	82	Onslow.
Raisonnable	72	Harvey.
Fortitude	82	Keppel.
Princess Amelia	84	Reynolds. Richard Hughes, contre-amiral.
Berwick	82	Phipps.
Bienfaisant	72	Howarth.
Dublin	82	Dickson.
Cambridge	84	Stewart.
Océan	100	Bigar. Milbanck, vice-amiral.
Union	100	Dalrymple.
Buffalo	60	Halloway.
Vengeance	82	Moutray.

The English admiral was too astute to jeopardize the success of the mission he had so brilliantly accomplished by engaging in battle with thirty-four ships against forty-six. He had noticed the lack of order in our line, due to the poor performance of many of our ships. Twelve French and Spanish ships were too far astern to take part in the action. Lord Howe immediately saw the opportunity to engage the combined fleet without having to commit all his forces. He had waited for us, sailing with reduced sail, but as soon as the first cannon shots were fired, he altered course and made full sail. At ten-thirty, the two fleets were far apart and the firing ceased. An hour later, Lieutenant General de Cordova signaled his ships to tack to the windward. The action had been intense only at the vanguard and rear guard of the British fleet. The squadron directly under Admiral Howe's command had barely fought. Twelve French and Spanish ships, including the *Terrible*, bearing the flag of Lieutenant General de Guichen, had not fired a single shot. These ships, despite having full sail, had been unable to keep up with the combined fleet.[1] By daybreak, the English were four leagues to leeward. Instead of actively pursuing them, Cordova made little progress during the day of the 21st, in order to allow the damaged ships time to repair their damage. The following day, seeing no sign of the enemy, he returned the combined fleet to Cadiz. In the engagement of October 21, the English suffered sixty-eight killed and two hundred and sixty-eight wounded, and the allies sixty killed and three hundred and twenty wounded.

1. "The *Terrible*, despite straining to make speed, was unable to open fire (the firing ceased at 10:30); the distance was too great. At 11:50, Cordova signaled to keep close to the wind. At midnight, the nearest British ships were two leagues away, sailing on a broad reach, under their main and fore sails, in order to rejoin their flagship, which was no longer visible." (Journal of the French squadron's senior officer)[348]

A few days later, Admiral Howe, certain that he no longer had anything to fear from the Franco-Spanish fleet, headed for Portsmouth, after dispatching eight ships to the West Indies.[1]

The qualities displayed by Lord Howe during this short campaign were entirely commensurate with the task he had to accomplish. This operation, one of the finest of the American Revolutionary War, deserves to be praised as much as a victory. While the English squadron was favored by circumstances, and it is rare that such undertakings can succeed without some luck, it was above all the keen insight of the commander-in-chief, the soundness of his judgment, and the speed of his decisions that ensured success. After giving Lord Howe his due credit, it is also fitting to acknowledge the British Admiralty. Among the thirty-four ships it had assigned to the admiral, there was not a single one of those poorly-built vessels that, at every moment, could jeopardize the plans of a commander-in-chief. All the ships were copper-sheathed and had approximately the same speed. If Lord Howe did not have absolute certainty, he at least had very good chances of remaining free to choose whether to engage in battle or not. This superiority in speed was an advantage whose value was demonstrated by the various events of the campaign. Finally, judging by the results, the commander-in-chief of the English fleet had every reason to be pleased with his captains.

1. Captain Curtis, who had played such a glorious role on September 13, had been entrusted by General Elliot with a mission for Admiral Howe. He had left Gibraltar on the frigate *Latona*, which arrived, on the night of the 18th to the 19th, in the midst of the English fleet. At dawn, before the *Latona* could communicate with the *Victory*, the combined fleet was sighted. The admiral immediately made sail and took the *Latona* with him. Captain Curtis took command of the *Victory*. Since Admiral Howe had sent his flag captain on a frigate to deliver dispatches to the Admiralty on October 22, he entrusted command of his ship to this brave officer.[349]

There were no separations, no collisions, and no ships damaged, and none of those events occurred, so frequent in fleet navigation, which often force admirals to take a course of action completely contrary to their intended objective.

In light of Admiral Howe's exceptionally safe navigation, it is impossible not to recall the unfortunate incidents that occurred, from the 9th to the 12th of April, in Count de Grasse's fleet. The French fleet, which had set sail on the 8th from Fort-Royal Bay, was forced on the 9th to come to the aid of the *Zélé* and the *Auguste*. The British vanguard was rapidly approaching these two ships, which had drifted downwind, and it was necessary to fight to rescue them. On the night of the 10th to the 11th, the *Jason* and the *Zélé* collided; the former ship put back to Guadeloupe to repair its damage. On the 11th, the fleet turned back once again to cover the *Zélé* and the *Magnanime*, which had also drifted downwind. Finally, on the night of the 11th to the 12th, this same *Zélé*, which had already compromised the fleet twice, collided with the *Ville-de-Paris*. While it is fair to acknowledge that Lord Howe displayed the greatest skill, it must also be said that he had excellent resources at his disposal.

Captain Buor de la Charoulière, the senior officer of the French fleet, when sending his logbook to the minister after this campaign, which reflected great credit on the British and very little on the allies, wrote: "I have the honor of sending you an extract from the logbook of the combined fleet's campaign." I am very much afraid that you may find some passages where my opinions are expressed too strongly, but I must give you, Your Lordship, a faithful copy of the entries in my journal, which could only be written as events unfolded and under the various circumstances that arose. I have written what I saw and what I thought. I dare hope, Your Lordship, that you will not take it amiss that I have freely expressed my views on all the events that did not turn out as we had hoped."[350]

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We have shared this officer's opinion regarding the events of September 13th and the pursuit of the British squadron.[351]

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BOOK XII

The French government learns that preparations are being made in Portsmouth for an expedition to seize the Cape of Good Hope. - Five ships are sent to India under the command of Admiral de Suffren. - The Battle of Praya, April 16, 1781. - The French arrive at Simon's Bay. - The British appear off the Cape at the end of July. - Commodore Johnstone returns to England with two ships. - Three ships sail for Bombay. - The Dutch colony is put into a state of defense by our troops. - The French squadron sets sail on August 28, 1781. - Suffren is appointed vice-admiral, in recognition of his conduct at the Battle of Praya. - Events that occurred in India since the capture of Pondicherry. - Ships sent to Île de France. - Captain Tronjolly is replaced by Count d'Orves. - The new commander-in-chief sets sail with six ships. - The squadron's stay on the Coromandel Coast. Relations with Hyder Ali. - Count d'Orves returns to Île de France. - The squadron's predicament. - The arrival of Admiral de Suffren. - Difficulties regarding the replacement of Captains de Trémigon and de Cardaillac, killed at the Battle of Praya. The squadron returns to India.

I

At the beginning of 1781, the French government learned that the British were secretly making preparations in Portsmouth for an expedition to conquer the Cape of Good Hope. Commodore Johnstone, to whom this mission was entrusted, had under his command five ships and a convoy carrying landing troops. The forces at the commodore's disposal left no doubt about the success of this undertaking. Although France could not expect much help from its new allies, it was in its interest to provide them with assistance.[352]

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Our objective in starting this war was to nullify the treaties of 1763 and to weaken the power of our neighbors. By seizing the Dutch colonial settlements, they would have secured for themselves, in advance, compensation for any losses they might suffer on the coasts of North America or in the Caribbean. Finally, British possession of the Cape would have compromised the security of Bourbon and the Isle of France. Five ships of the line were designated for service in the Indian Ocean: two 74-gun ships, the *Héros* and the *Annibal*, and three 64-gun ships, the *Sphinx*, the *Vengeur*, and the *Artésien*. Several merchant ships were also attached to the squadron, carrying 1,100 infantrymen, provisions, ammunition, and 100 artillerymen. The new minister placed Admiral de Suffren in command of this fleet. It is worth recalling that M. de Sartines had refused, despite the very strong pleas of Count d'Estaing, to promote this officer. Suffren was not promoted to the rank of rear admiral, but Marshal de Castries decided that he would enjoy the privileges attached to that rank as soon as he rounded the Cape of Good Hope. The same privileges were granted to Count d'Orves, who was stationed at the Isle of France with six ships. Since d'Orves was senior in rank to Suffren, he was to assume command of the entire naval force after the two divisions joined forces. Suffren was instructed that, if he arrived at the Cape before Johnstone, he was to immediately put the port in a state of defense. He was also to send a ship to the Isle of France to inform Count d'Orves of the situation in the colony and the measures taken to repel the British. The frigate *La Fine* departed from Brest on March 15, 1781, to carry this news to the Cape of Good Hope and to Île de France (Mauritius).

Suffren set sail on March 22 with the fleet that the Comte de Grasse was leading to the West Indies. On the 29th, he received orders to separate from the main fleet and proceed to his destination. His ships had a large number of sick crew members on board when they left Brest.[353]

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In the first days of April, the health situation aboard the ships, far from improving, took on alarming proportions. Suffren feared that his division might become incapacitated, as had the fleet of Count d'Orvilliers in 1779. Of all the misfortunes that his bad luck could bring upon him, this was, in his eyes, the greatest. Therefore, despite his remarkable energy and his strong desire to make a quick passage, he deemed it necessary to stop at the Cape Verde Islands to obtain fresh provisions and replenish their water supply. He intended to take advantage of this stopover to repair two transport ships that had sustained serious damage in a collision.

On April 16, at dawn, the French fleet, after sighting the island of São Tiago, steered towards the bay of Praia. At eight and a quarter, the *Artésien*, which was scouting ahead, signaled: "Enemy ships at anchor." There was no doubt that we were in the presence of the expedition that the British had sent against the Cape of Good Hope. This encounter had the advantage of informing us of the enemy's position. What course of action should be taken in this situation? This was the question Suffren asked himself. We had enough water, by rationing the crews, to reach the Cape of Good Hope. If we arrived there first, we would put the colony in a state of defense, thus fulfilling the main objective of the mission entrusted to the squadron. The damage to the two ships mentioned above and the slow progress of the convoy led Suffren to abandon this plan. He considered sending the transport ships ahead and cruising off the bay, in order to engage the British when they sailed out. Based on the information he had received from Paris a few days before his departure, he assumed that Johnstone's fleet was much larger than it actually was.

1. The ship "*L'Artésien*" had been added to the commander's division on March 19th by the minister himself, who was present in Brest at the time. This ship had not yet had time to take on full supplies of water.[354]

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Consequently, he did not believe that, in a regular engagement, he would gain such an advantage over the enemy that they would be unable to continue their voyage to the Cape. There was then no other option than to enter the bay of Praya and attack the enemy directly. The position of our ships was not favorable for adopting this course of action. The *Annibal* and the *Artois* were near the *Héros*, but the *Sphinx* and the *Vengeur*, the latter towing a ship, were a considerable distance astern. By engaging immediately, we would have the advantage of surprise, but we would also expose ourselves to sustaining, with only three ships, the fire of the entire enemy squadron for a considerable period. On the other hand, if the commander waited for the *Sphinx* and the *Vengeur*, the *Héros*, the *Annibal*, and the *Artois* would fall to leeward. Suffren quickly weighed these various considerations, and he decided on an immediate attack. The neutrality of the island was of little importance to an officer who had witnessed the affair at Lagos[1]. Perhaps the commander was not displeased to repay the English for what they had done to us in 1759.

After signaling his division to prepare for battle, and ordering the lagging ships to make all sail (the signal to anchor had been given earlier), Suffren took the lead in the line. The lookouts on the *Héros* soon spotted five ships, three frigates, and a large number of transports flying the English flag.

1. In 1759, an English squadron of fourteen ships attacked four French ships anchored in the bay of Lagos, under the guns of the Portuguese forts. Suffren served as a lieutenant on the 80-gun ship "*L'Océan*," which carried the flag of Rear Admiral de la Clue. "*L'Océan*," one of four ships that had sought refuge in Lagos, was captured by the enemy, and Suffren became a prisoner of the British.[355]

Commodore Johnstone's squadron consisted of the 74-gun ship *Hero*, the 64-gun *Monmouth*, the 50-gun ships *Romney* and *Isis*, the 32-gun frigates *Diane, Jason* and *Active*, a cutter, a fireship, and a bomb-galleot. The transport fleet comprised thirty-five vessels, carrying ten, twenty, and thirty guns.

The commodore had left England on March 13, at the same time as the large squadron, under the command of Admiral Darby, which was tasked with resupplying Gibraltar. He separated from it a few days later, and anchored at Praya on April 11 to take on water and provisions. Firmly convinced that we were unaware of his departure, he had taken no special precautions against an attack, which he did not believe would occur. The ships were anchored in an irregular line running from east-southeast to west-northwest. The frigates were at the ends of this line, and the transports were positioned between the warships and the shore. The bay of Praya, sheltered from winds blowing from east to west, including from the north, is completely open to the south. With the breeze blowing from north-northeast, we had to hug the point that bounds the bay to the south and east, then tack to windward, with the starboard tack in, to reach the anchorage. Shortly before ten o'clock in the morning, the sailors on the Isis, the ship anchored furthest out, spotted three ships steering to round the eastern point of the bay. A moment later, the signal flags meaning "enemy in sight" were hoisted at the top of the masts of that ship. The surprise was all the greater aboard the British ships, as the captains, suspecting no danger, had sent part of their crews ashore to collect water and provisions. The commodore never for a moment believed that the French would respect the island's neutrality. He knew that England's actions, not only in the Lagos affair, but also in several other instances, would serve as justification for an attack, should the French decide to launch one. He then signaled his squadron to recall the boats, prepare for action, and get ready to sail.[356]

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Finally, he left his ship, the *Romney*, anchored at the western end of the line, and boarded the *Hero*, where his flag was hoisted. At eleven o'clock in the morning, the flagship of the French squadron, with its flag flying at the stern, entered the bay. Having reached within cannon range of the enemy, Suffren ordered both sides to open fire. The English replied immediately, and the battle began with great intensity. The *Héros* dropped anchor broadside to the enemy, at a distance of two-thirds of a cable's length from the commodore's ship.[1] To starboard of the *Héros* were the *Monmouth*, the *Jupiter*, the *Isis*, and the frigates *Diane* and *Active*; to port, the *Hero*, the *Romney*, and the frigate *Jason*. The commander of the *Annibal*, M. de Trémigon, tacked closer to the wind than the *Héros* had done, and anchored to the bow of that ship. It was difficult to maneuver more skillfully. The *Héros* and the An*nibal*, heading north-north-east and south-south-west respectively, were positioned on a line perpendicular to the English line. In this position, both ships could use their broadside guns. The captain of the *Artésien* positioned his ship astern of the *Héros*, and headed towards a vessel which, through the smoke, he assumed to be a ship of the line. His intention was to board this vessel. The order to anchor had just been given when Captain de Cardaillac fell, struck by a cannonball. This order was not carried out, and the ship, still under way, passed the English ship. The *Artésien* boarded a transport ship that had cut its anchor cable to escape into the open sea, and the two vessels drifted out of the bay, carried by the wind and current.

1. The *Héros*, maneuvering to avoid the wind, approached a merchant ship, from which it then detached itself by releasing its anchor cable. Eight sailors from that merchant ship jumped aboard the warship.[357]

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The lieutenant, who was to take command of the *Artésien*, was walking through the gun decks when his captain was killed. A considerable amount of time passed, under these circumstances, before he was informed of this event. When he appeared on deck, the *Artésien* could only rejoin the battle after repairing its rigging and tacking into the wind. Captains Forbin and Chilleau, commanding the *Vengeur* and the *Sphinx*, made the mistake of not keeping close to the southern tip of the island. Furthermore, they had the misfortune of finding the breeze coming from the north when they tacked to starboard to reach the point where the *Héros* and the *Annibal* were engaged. As a result of these circumstances, the two ships passed far from the English and French vessels. Having reached the other side of the bay, the *Vengeur* and the *Sphinx* tacked, but, due to the light breeze and the effect of the current, these two ships were very quickly out of cannon range. Thus, of the five ships that made up the French squadron, only two were facing the enemy. This situation allowed all the English ships—vessels of the line, frigates, and transports—to concentrate their fire on the *Héros* and the *Annibal*. These two ships were also heavily harassed by a very intense musket fire from the ships carrying troops. Finally, the Portuguese, having decided to defend their neutrality, fired cannonballs at our squadron from a fort overlooking the bay. It had not yet been an hour since the first cannon shots were fired, and the *Héros* already had very serious damage. The rigging was damaged, the shrouds were cut, and the masts were riddled with cannonballs. The *Annibal* seemed to be no less badly damaged. His mainmast was broken above the crosstrees, and all his rigging was in complete disarray. Since this battle, if prolonged, could only lead to disaster, Suffren decided to rejoin the ships *Sphinx*, *Vengeur*, and *Artésien*.[358]

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With the flag halyards having been cut by enemy fire, he was unable to communicate this decision to the *Annibal*. Furthermore, they could not wait to reach open sea until both ships were completely dismasted. The commander, convinced that his companion would imitate his maneuver, ordered the anchor cable to be cut. The lieutenant de Galle, who had replaced Captain de Trémigon, killed during the battle, was closely observing what was happening aboard the flagship. As soon as the *Héros* began to move, he ordered the anchor cable of the *Annibal* to be cut. A few scraps of sail were rigged to facilitate the maneuver, but the rigging, riddled with cannonballs, could not withstand such a slight strain. When the ship was broadside to the wind, the mainmast and mizzenmast came down. However, the maneuver was completed, and the ship left the bay with the wind astern. Seeing the *Annibal* sailing away, Suffren was extremely pleased. This engagement, undertaken with such audacity, he had not lost, since he was withdrawing with all his ships. The *Annibal* was battered like a barge, and the *Héros* had lost two topmasts, but the *Sphinx*, the *Artésien*, and the *Vengeur* were intact. Although the commander was unaware of the damage to the English ships, he did not believe that they could have withstood, for an hour, the fire of the *Héros* and the *Annibal* without sustaining considerable damage. He immediately set about preparing his division to receive the enemy, if, as he suspected, they sailed out of Praya Bay. As soon as the rigging for the ensign halyards had been re-rigged on board his ship, the order was given to the *Sphinx* to take the *Annibal* in tow, and for the convoy to proceed to its destination, escorted by the *Fortune*.[1]

1. This corvette was alongside the fire-ship *L'Infernal* when the signal concerning it was hoisted. Understanding the necessity of obeying without delay, its captain abandoned the English ship, taking with him the captain and fifteen crew members who were already on board his vessel.

The captain of the *Artésien* had taken some men on board a ship belonging to the East India Company, but, due to an error as regrettable as it was difficult to explain, he had put twenty-two men on board a ship that already had eighty crew members. The English ship was recaptured the same day, and the squadron thus lost twenty-two sailors quite unnecessarily. The commander, who was far from satisfied with the role the *Artésien* had played after the death of Captain de Cardaillac, was very displeased with this mistake.[359]

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Ten or twelve English transports, which had weighed anchor, would inevitably have fallen into our hands had our attack been more successful. The situation of the *Annibal* and the necessity of protecting our convoy prevented us from pursuing them. At three o'clock in the afternoon, the English were sighted, sailing on a broad course towards our squadron. Suffren ordered the fleet to tack to the windward, port tack, with the *Annibal* in tow of the *Sphinx*, and he awaited the enemy. When they were within one and a half cannon shot, Johnston took the lead and maintained that position. As soon as night fell, Suffren headed for the Cape of Good Hope. The fear of being driven downwind into the anchorage, where he had left part of his convoy, and the poor condition of some of his ships prevented the commodore from attacking us.

The *Héros* lost thirty-four men killed and had fifty-six wounded. The number of dead on the *Annibal* rose to seventy, and the number of wounded to one hundred and thirty. A mistake made by Captain de Trémigon contributed to this outcome. When the signal to prepare for battle appeared at the top of the *Héros'* masts, the sick, who were numerous, and the water casks, which, through excessive zeal, had been brought up from the hold prematurely, were obstructing the gun decks. Convinced that Suffren would respect the island's neutrality, Captain de Trémigon did not believe it necessary to clear them away. Consequently, the necessary preparations for battle were only very incompletely carried out on his ship.[360]

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Hearing the cannon fire echoing in the bay, he understood the full gravity of his mistake. Although disarmed, he continued his course without reducing sail, receiving cannonballs to which he could not reply. His ship suffered considerable losses before being able to open fire. We would not dwell on this fault, which was nobly redeemed, were it not necessary to show the consequences that can result from disobeying an order. The *Artésien*, besides its captain who was killed, had eighteen wounded. Such was the battle of Praya, in which two French ships fought heroically against five English ships.

The circumstances under which our attack took place deprived Suffren of any control over the actions of his ships. When the presence of the enemy was reported, his division was not yet properly formed. The *Annibal* was near the *Héros*, while the *Artésien* was some distance ahead and to leeward. The *Vengeur* and the *Sphinx*, which were sailing slowly, were still very far away, and one of them had a ship in tow. If Suffren decided to wait for the *Vengeur* and the *Sphinx*, he would, as we have already mentioned, lose the advantage of an unexpected attack. On the other hand, by immediately engaging the enemy, he would forgo communicating with his ships and fighting according to a pre-arranged plan. Forced to choose, he opted for the latter as being the most likely to achieve his objective. He believed that his captains, judging the situation as he himself did, would know how to find their battle positions. The captain of the *Annibal* fully justified his commander's confidence. Following closely behind the *Héros*, he assessed the enemy's position, and he anchored in a manner that drew the admiration of both the English and French officers. When the *Artésien* entered the bay, the smoke was so thick that Captain de Cardaillac mistook a ship belonging to the East India Company for a warship.[361]

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If the order to drop anchor had been carried out, this incident would have been insignificant. After receiving a prize crew, the *Fortitude*[1] cut its anchor cable and rejoined our convoy, leaving the guns of the *Artésien* free on both sides. The death of Captain de Cardaillac, the ensuing confusion, and the failure to execute the order to anchor deprived Suffren of the *Artésien*. The *Vengeur* and the *Sphinx* arrived at the scene of the battle more than half an hour after the start of the action. The captains du Chilleau and de Forbin crossed the bay without anchoring, and when they tacked, they found themselves downwind. This series of unfavorable circumstances completely altered the commander-in-chief's plan. Suffren had attacked, or more precisely, had rushed the enemy with two ships, because he expected the third, and then the other two, to come quickly to his aid. Disappointed in this hope, he had no choice but to retreat, which he did calmly and resolutely. It should not be forgotten that these various events occurred with extreme rapidity. At eleven o'clock in the morning, the *Héros* dropped anchor in the middle of the English squadron, and at noon it cut its anchor cable. The captains of the *Artésien*, the *Vengeur*, and the *Sphinx* did not have time to rectify the mistake they had made by failing to anchor. Furthermore, it would be unfair not to acknowledge that the *Vengeur* and the *Sphinx*, arriving late on the battlefield, encountered more difficulties in taking their positions than the *Héros* and the *Annibal*, which had had ample time, before a single cannon shot was fired, to assess the enemy's position.

1. That was the name of the East India Company ship that Captain de Cardaillac mistakenly headed towards.

2. The "*Artésien*" is only mentioned from the point when Captain de Cardaillac was killed.[362]

II

After the two squadrons separated, Suffren's only concern was to gain speed on his adversary. The *Annibal*, towed by the *Sphinx*, rigged temporary masts. As for the *Héros*, which, moreover, was sailing very well, its damage was quickly repaired. On June 18, the squadron rounded the Cape of Good Hope. That day, in accordance with the King's orders, Suffren hoisted the flag of squadron commander on board his ship.[1] On the 21st, he entered Simon's Bay, where he was pleased to learn that there had been no news of the enemy. The colony was not in a position to resist Commodore Johnstone's forces. The garrison consisted of no more than four hundred regular troops. The fortifications were insignificant, and the artillery equipment, with the exception of a few pieces recently arrived from Europe, was out of service. The troops embarked on our ships were sent to the city of Cape Town, a few miles from the anchorage. While Brigadier Conway, under whose command they were, made his preparations to repel the English, the squadron repaired its ships and replenished its supplies. At the end of June, the corvette *La Fortune* and the transports rejoined the flagship.

Commodore Johnstone left Praya Bay on May 2 and headed for the Cape of Good Hope.

1. On June 18, when rounding the Cape of Good Hope, the commander hoisted the flag of squadron commander, having received orders from His Majesty to assume the prerogatives and honors of that rank in the seas beyond the Cape. He was greeted with shouts of "Long live the King!" from the ships of the squadron (*Journal of the Squadron's Major*).[363]

Having been informed, by a neutral vessel, of the defensive preparations made by our troops, he did not consider himself able to carry out the mission entrusted to him. Shortly before the French squadron anchored in Simon's Bay, the news of the imminent arrival of the British expedition had spread throughout the colony. At that time, five richly laden Dutch ships were in the harbor of Cape Town. Certain of being captured if they remained at anchor, and fearing to encounter the English if they put to sea, the captains of these vessels had withdrawn to Saldanha Bay, intending to sail once they knew the position of the English. They made the mistake of not returning to Cape Town immediately after our arrival. These various incidents came to the attention of the commodore. Convinced that the damage inflicted on Dutch commerce would mitigate, in the eyes of his countrymen, the misfortunes of his campaign, he set sail for Saldanha Bay.[1] There, on July 21 at dawn, he surprised the five ships, which were being guarded with great negligence. One of them was burned by its crew, but the other four fell into the hands of the English. Although the *Annibal* was not in a position to follow him, Suffren weighed anchor as soon as he learned of the enemy's presence on the coast. After searching in vain for the English squadron, he anchored on August 10 off the city of Cape Town. The Dutch colony no longer had anything to fear from the forces under Johnstone's command. The commodore had departed on July 24 for England, with the *Jupiter*, the *Romney*, the frigates, and the captured ships. The ships *Hero*, *Monmouth*, *Isis*, and the transports had headed for Bombay. On August 16, the frigate *La Consolante*, arriving from Île de France, delivered orders to the commander to rejoin Count d'Orves, provided he could leave the Cape without jeopardizing the safety of the colony. On August 28, with repairs to the *Annibal* completed, Suffren set sail with the squadron and the convoy.

1. Saldanha Bay is located on the west coast of Africa, sixty miles north of the Cape of Good Hope.[364]

A few days before his departure, he had dispatched a ship to Europe to carry his dispatches. Convinced that the French government had learned of the Praya affair from accounts in the English newspapers, he wondered, not without some anxiety, whether his actions would be approved by the court. In order to justify himself, he wrote to the minister: “I decided to attack Johnstone in Praya Bay with the very strong hope of destroying him. The unfavorable conditions of the anchorage and the element of surprise were to give me this advantage, the result of which would be to crush all the plans and projects of this expedition, to gain lasting superiority in India, a superiority from which a glorious peace could result, and to prevent the English from reaching the Cape before me, an objective which was achieved and which was the main purpose of my mission. Based on the information you gave me about the enemy forces, I had no hope of defeating them at sea. I therefore had to seize the opportunity to attack them in a position that promised success. That is what concerns the military aspect. As for the political aspect, I have the honor to point out that Johnstone calls Praya a bay, but, according to the meaning of the Portuguese word, it is merely a beach. In all the authors on international law, whether Grotius, Puffendorf, or Selden, there is nothing that can establish a consistent rule regarding the respect due to territory. Our ordinances do not mention it. In 1759, the English captured and burned the remnants of La Clue's squadron under the forts on the Portuguese coast, forty leagues from Lisbon. The *Rose* was burned on the coast of Malta and the *Nymphe* on that of Majorca by Captain Hervé, later known as the Earl of Bristol. To this argument can be added the great importance of the objective.” "Please forgive me, Your Lordship, for having missed the opportunity to achieve great things with limited resources."[365]

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Suffren was, mistakenly, concerned about the French government's opinion of him. His conduct had, in official circles, met with nothing but approval. When Commodore Johnstone's report, published in the English newspapers, crossed the Strait, Marshal de Castries expressed the most favorable sentiments toward the commander. Although he had received no news of the French squadron and was unaware of the condition in which the *Héros* and the *Annibal* had left the Bay of Praia, he immediately wrote to Suffren to reassure him about the outcome of this affair.[1] The court at Versailles did not view with pleasure the difficulties that the violation of Portuguese territory would raise, but the minister wished to maintain the spirit of initiative that Suffren had demonstrated in the battle of April 16. When the reports sent from the Cape arrived in Paris, the commander was promoted to rear admiral. The minister announced his promotion to him in the following terms: "The King informed you in your instructions, sir, that all courageous actions undertaken by his generals, even if they did not achieve the success their conduct deserved, would nonetheless be honored by him, and that he would only be displeased by their inaction. His Majesty, based on the initial reports, was not aware of all the circumstances surrounding the decision you made when you determined to attack Commodore Johnstone at Praia.

1. Suffren received this letter on the Isle of France in November 1781. He replied to the minister: "I have received the letter you were kind enough to write to me, dated July 1, regarding the affair at Praia. I cannot express how much I appreciated your kindness in reassuring me about my fears that you might not have approved of my conduct." In a personal letter on the same subject, he wrote: "M. de Castries wrote me a very pleasant letter from Pondicherry, regarding an affair of which he knows only what he has read in the English accounts."

2. Suffren received this letter only at the end of February 1783, while in the harbor of Trincomalee.[366]

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He has since recognized, from various details that have reached her, that you conducted yourself in this important circumstance like a seaman of great promise, and, without regard to the outcome, for which you are not responsible, nor to the rank you hold among her ship captains, he has instructed me to inform you that he is appointing you to the rank of rear admiral, reserving, however, the right to restore the rank to those ship captains, your seniors, who find opportunities to distinguish themselves during the course of this campaign."

III

Captain de Tronjolly, who, at the beginning of the war, commanded the French ships stationed in India, had left the Coromandel coast when the English laid siege to Pondicherry. He had retreated to the Isle of France, where he found the ship *Le Flamand*, a 50-gun vessel, which had left Brest before the outbreak of hostilities. The Minister had ordered Captain de Tronjolly to consider himself specifically assigned to the defense of Bourbon and the Isle of France. Our government, which was preparing to send six ships to India, judged it unnecessary to risk Captain de Tronjolly's small squadron before the arrival of this powerful reinforcement. Contrary to what was assumed in Paris, the English had only insignificant forces in India. Instead of sailing to the Malabar and Coromandel coasts, where he could have harassed them, Captain de Tronjolly, even though he was subsequently joined by the 74-gun *Orient* and the 64-gun *Sévère*, adhered strictly to his orders. He only sailed to conduct a short patrol in the vicinity of the Cape of Good Hope. Upon receiving news of Count d'Estaing's failure before Saint Lucia, the squadron destined for India was redirected to the West Indies.[367]

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A second squadron, ready to sail for the Isle of France, was once again diverted from its destination. M. de Ternay, who commanded it, was ordered to transport the six thousand men of Rochambeau's corps to Rhode Island. The minister dispatched the *Bizarre* to the Isle of France, and then, a few months later, the *Protée*, the *Ajax*, and several transport ships. It is worth recalling that the *Protée* was captured, along with several ships in its convoy, by the squadron of Rear Admiral Digby. At the end of 1780, the Count d'Orves, who had replaced M. de Tronjolly, had under his command the 74-gun ship *L'Orient*, the *Brillant*, the *Bizarre*, the *Sévère*, the 64-gun ship *Ajax*, the 50-gun ship *Le Flamand*, and several frigates. The new commander-in-chief did not want to keep six ships stationed at two islands that were not under any threat. He insisted with the governor-general for permission to sail to the Coromandel Coast. Although the minister had not changed the orders he had previously given, M. de Souillac agreed to this request, but stipulated that the Count d'Orves would avoid any operation that could jeopardize his squadron. With the Company's warehouses empty, the governor-general feared that he would be unable to repair our ships if they returned with damage. It was therefore agreed that this sortie would have no other purpose than to display our flag along the Coromandel Coast.[1]

1. The nature of the mission given to the squadron is clearly defined in the following passage from a letter that the Count d'Orves wrote to the Minister of the Navy upon his return from the Coromandel Coast: “My campaign log has informed you of the inadequacy of the resources entrusted to me to make it as advantageous as it could have been with supplies that would have allowed me to remain longer along the Coromandel Coast. I could only appear there to fulfill the essential objective of my mission, which was to demonstrate to the Indian princes forces that would give them well-founded confidence in our power and our willingness to combine with their own forces sufficient to support them in the war they were waging against our enemies, and to encourage them to continue it. I had the honor of informing Mr. de Sartines, in the letters I left upon my departure, that I considered the campaign I was about to undertake as merely a preparatory measure. And indeed, the lack of orders from the court had led Mr. de Souillac to give me the strongest instructions not to jeopardize the ships whose command had been entrusted to me, since all the ministerial dispatches described them as being solely intended for the defense of the Isle of France. You will also see, My Lord, how much he recommended their preservation to me, pointing out the limited resources I would have to refit the squadron, which he anticipated would be assigned to operations ordered by the court, according to higher-level objectives.”[368]

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Count d'Orves set sail from Port-Louis on October 14, 1780, with six ships of the line and three frigates. After remaining for several days at the entrance to the Surat harbor to take on water, he appeared off Madras on January 27. The English ships in the harbor, having taken refuge under the guns of Fort St. George, our vessels continued their voyage south, and anchored a short distance from Pondicherry. The English, believing that we intended to land troops there, sent troops in that direction.

At the very moment the French squadron arrived on the Coromandel Coast, British power in India was undergoing a period of great peril. The native rulers, forgetting their own rivalries, had united against the English. At the beginning of 1780, the Company's troops had been attacked simultaneously in Bengal, on the Malabar Coast, and on the Coromandel Coast. Hyder Ali, who ruled the kingdom of Mysore as regent, had invaded Carnatic with one hundred thousand men and a large artillery force. Several English detachments had been taken prisoner by his troops, and he had captured, after a regular siege, the city of Arcot, capital of the Nawab's domain of that name. A very able general, Sir Eyre Coote, had halted the sultan's advance, but the Mysore army maintained the positions it had conquered and continued its campaign.[369]

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The Nawab, having been quickly informed of the British troops' movement towards Pondicherry, positioned his army by a rapid march between that city and Madras. The English having retreated to Goudelour, the Indian army established itself before this place, which was barely fortified.

Hyder Ali, upon learning of the arrival of a French squadron, had his camp fire a cannon salute as a sign of rejoicing. He welcomed Messrs. de Salvert, captain of *La Fine*, and Pivron de Morlat, former King's Attorney in Pondicherry, who had been sent to him by Count d'Orves, with the greatest enthusiasm. The Nawab declared that he was ready to provide us with men, provisions, and money, if we agreed to land a French detachment. This proposal could not be followed up, since we had no troops for landing; so he requested the support of the squadron to capture Goudelour. He also insisted, with great urgency, that a French detachment assist his army during the siege operations. Admiral Hughes having left the Coromandel coast on October 14 to go to Bombay, the place could expect no help from the British navy. Attacked by land and sea, cut off from all communication with Madras, the city would have surrendered at discretion. Our squadron, at that time, only had enough provisions to complete its return voyage. Whether Count d'Orves was convinced that he would not be able to obtain supplies on the coast, or whether, having left for India without orders, or rather against the government's orders, he was eager to return to Isle de France, he refused his assistance. "M. de Souillac," he wrote to the Sultan, "has forbidden me in the most formal manner to land a single man." He added that, according to his very specific instructions, he was obliged to be at the Isle of France in April to join forces with a squadron expected from Europe. He offered the sultan to leave two hundred and fifty marines with him, but the sultan declined this offer.[1]

1. “You inform us that you cannot disembark the troops under your command; it is only right that you should obey the orders of your King. We are very grateful for your offer of two hundred and fifty men, which you have made on your own initiative, despite the objections of Souillac and Ternay. Since you do not have orders to disembark the troops from your ships, we do not advise you to accept this offer. We advise you to return as soon as possible, bringing with you twenty-five warships to capture all the English vessels at sea, and six thousand highly experienced troops to wage war on land.” (Hyder-Ali to d'Orves)[370]

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The squadron set sail on February 13, and anchored at Île de France on March 31. Upon arrival, it had only enough biscuits and rice for eight days. Count d'Orves had therefore left in time, but if he had wanted to extend his stay on the coast, it is inconceivable that he would not have found provisions for six ships for a month, either from the Danes at Tranquebar, or from the Dutch at Negapatam or Ceylon. Hyder Ali's requested cooperation would not have lasted any longer.

The frigate *La Fine* had left Brest on March 16, 1781, carrying news of Suffren's departure to Île de France. After stopping at the Cape of Good Hope on May 25, this frigate arrived at its destination on July 10. The instructions it brought to the squadron's commander left him free to choose between three options: patrolling the waters around the Cape of Good Hope to intercept Johnstone and his convoy, waiting for Suffren at Île de France, or sailing for India and rendezvousing with the admiral. The squadron was to make the necessary preparations for a six-month campaign. The minister was completely unaware, when issuing these orders, of Count d'Orves's situation. We had no supplies or equipment of any kind at Île de France. As for the resources available through trade, they had long since been exhausted. The squadron had not undergone any repairs since its return from the Coromandel Coast. Count d'Orves's efforts, upon the arrival of *La Fine*, had only resulted in getting the Consolante ready to sail.[371]

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This officer wrote to the minister on August 1, 1781: “The Viscount de Souillac has given me full details of the King's instructions that you sent us.... I am deeply regretful that I was not in a position to set sail when your orders arrived, but it is impossible for me to put to sea, with any degree of safety, two ships in the state of destitution in which the King's stores are, which is why we have decided to dispatch the *Consolante* with the instructions of which we are jointly reporting to you, as well as the plans that the circumstances allow us to formulate. All the cables in the squadron are insufficient for even one ship. We are completely lacking in rigging, sails, and masts. But I cannot give you a clearer idea of the state of the navy on this island than by explaining the necessity we were reduced to, after taking from the six ships what provisions they could spare for the *Consolante*, of purchasing supplies from private individuals, at any price, to enable her to sail.” As a result of this dire situation, for which the responsibility rested with the administration of Mr. de Sartines, the Indian squadron had rendered no service.[1] The Count d'Orves, who had acquired an honorable reputation as a ship captain, had proved to be a very mediocre general during this campaign. However, we must emphasize the particularly difficult situation in which the minister's lack of foresight had placed him.

The Commander de Suffren anchored in the bay of Port-Louis on October 25, 1781, with his division. The supplies, provisions, and munitions, loaded on the transports, were unloaded, and work on reorganizing our squadron began immediately.

1. Mr. de Sartines had left the ministry only in October 1780.[372]

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IV

It will be recalled that the ships *Annibal* and *Artois* had lost their captains in the battle of Praya. Suffren had appointed Lieutenants de Galle and de Beaulieu to replace Messrs. de Trémigon and de Cardaillac. After the two divisions had joined, it was up to Count d'Orves, as commander-in-chief, to make the final decision regarding the measures taken by his subordinate. The corvette *La Fortune*, coming from the Cape of Good Hope, anchored in the harbor of Port-Louis on September 6. She brought letters from the commander which informed Count d'Orves of all the events of April 16. The latter publicly stated his intention to make changes among the captains as soon as all the forces under his command were assembled. In particular, he intended to assign the 74-gun ship *Annibal* to Captain Le Goarant de Tromelin. Suffren strongly advocated for Messrs. de Galle and de Beaulieu, and he obtained permission for the former to retain his command. As for the latter, whose seniority was less than that of his colleague, it was decided that he would receive a frigate. When the change in Count d'Orves's plans became known, numerous protests arose. Several captains did not hesitate to say that they would leave their ships if the squadron commander maintained his decision. Far from being disturbed by such a clear act of insubordination, he reversed the commitment he had made to Suffren. He viewed this matter as purely a matter of regulations, and left the decision to the captains themselves. In accordance with their opinion, he removed Captain de Galle from command of the *Annibal* and gave it to Captain de Tromelin.[373]

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Suffren, dissatisfied with the conduct of Count d'Orves, and convinced that the squadron, under such a commander, would not achieve any success, considered returning to France. He wrote to the minister on September 7, 1781: “Your Excellency, you know with what reluctance I sailed to India. You are also aware that I was primarily motivated by my desire to earn your esteem. You kindly promised to recall me in eighteen months, starting from March. I beg you to remember this promise. If you grant me permission, I assure you that I will not take advantage of it as long as I believe I can still be useful to the service in this region.” In this matter, form had taken such precedence over substance that it overshadowed the actual issue. It was not only in accordance with hierarchical protocol, but also militarily advantageous, to assign the third 74-gun ship to the most senior captain, after those of d'Orves and Suffren—that is, to the one who was entitled to command the third division. If this was the opinion of Count d'Orves, and it was certainly a very sound one[1], why didn't he explain it clearly to Suffren? If, on the contrary, he deemed it useful to award an exceptional promotion to a young officer who had brought honor to our flag before the enemy, why didn't he impose his will on his squadron? Finally, whatever the merit of his final decision, why didn't he maintain it, especially given the attitude of some of his captains?

1. Suffren took command of the squadron on February 9, 1782, after the death of Count d'Orves. On that day, he had at his disposal a 74-gun ship, the *Orient*, which he had the right to assign to the former second-in-command of the *Annibal*. If he had wished to return to M. de Galle the ship with which he had fought at Praya, he could have taken the *Annibal* from M. de Tromelin, who was then commanding it, and given him the *Orient* instead. M. de Tromelin, exchanging a 74-gun ship for another of the same size, would have had no reason to complain. However, as we shall see later, this was not the course of action that Suffren chose. He gave the British 50-gun ship *Hannibal* to M. de Galle, and the *Bellone* to M. de Beaulieu. At that time, there were numerous changes of command among the captains; all of these were based on seniority.[374]

When these events became known in Paris, the minister, extremely irritated, sent the following dispatch to Count d'Orves: “I am sending you an order from the King, sir, to reinstate Captain de Galle in command of the *Annibal*, which he has commanded so distinguishedly. I must inform you that it has come to His Majesty's attention that you removed him from command at the request of his officers, who threatened to resign if their seniority was not respected. The King could not believe that such a threat had been made to you, and even less that you had given in to it. But if, by chance, when you reinstate Captain de Galle on board the *Annibal* (which must be done upon receipt of the King's order), some of his officers wish to resign, His Majesty orders you to accept their resignations and to send them back to Europe.”

This dispatch was very harsh for Count d'Orves, as it settled, in a way contrary to his own decision, a matter that had been publicly debated within his squadron. But the minister rightly considered him the main culprit. He was convinced that no resistance would have occurred if Count d'Orves had shown any resolve. Finally, not wanting to disrupt the squadron by recalling most of the captains, he had used the only means at his disposal to counteract the negative impact of this act of insubordination. The instructions brought by the Fine gave Count d'Orves complete freedom regarding the choice of operations. The minister told him: "The King, while allowing the generals to decide on the operations they deem most useful and advantageous for his army, instructs them to attack the English, whether they are dispersed or gathered together, wherever it is feasible, unless there is clear evidence that such an attack would lead to the destruction of their forces. His Majesty's wisdom has prevented him from specifying any particular operation."[375]

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He knows that at four thousand leagues from him, it would be imprudent to give precise instructions, and consequently, he merely informs the Count d'Orves that the inactivity of his squadron is what he most opposes, that unfortunate events or inaction would both be contrary to her objectives; thus, he simply advises the Count d'Orves to take advantage of the superiority or parity of forces he should have this year against the English in the seas of Asia, to ruin their trade and destroy any of their establishments that he can attack successfully. His Majesty graciously assures the Count d'Orves that he will not hold him responsible for any unfortunate events that might occur, but that he would be held responsible if he did not use the resources that his intelligence and courage could inspire to make the campaign both useful and glorious for his forces."[1] The spirit in which these instructions were written cannot be praised enough. The government did not claim to specify precisely what the squadron should do. On this point, the minister relied on the zeal and skill of the officer to whom command of our naval forces had been entrusted. However, the instructions addressed to the commander of the Indian squadron contained a very clear order: to seek out the enemy and engage them in battle. We had only one other decision to make: to return to the Coromandel Coast and resume the relations begun at the beginning of the year with Hyder Ali. In accordance with the arrangements made in Paris, the troops, who were not absolutely necessary for the security of the islands of Mauritius and Réunion, were embarked on the ships of the squadron or on the convoy vessels.[2] The army set sail on December 17, 1781.

1. In the King's own handwriting: "Approved."

2. It has been claimed that the embarkation of the troops was the result of a plot hatched against Mr. de Souillac. In reality, it was simply the execution of an order which read as follows: "In all these circumstances, His Majesty authorizes Messrs. d'Orves and de Souillac to withdraw troops from the islands and to embark them on the fleet, in whatever numbers they deem necessary for their purposes. They will leave behind only enough forces to ensure the safety of the islands. It is estimated that they will be able to withdraw fifteen hundred men."[376]

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It comprised the following ships: the *Orient*, the *Héros*, and the *Annibal*, each with 74 guns; the *Vengeur*, the *Sévère*, the *Bizarre*, the *Sphinx*, the *Artésien*, and the *Ajax*, each with 64 guns; the *Flamand*, with 50 guns; the *Pourvoyeuse*, with 38 guns; the *Fine* and the *Bellone*, each with 32 guns; the *Subtile*, with 22 guns; the *Sylphide*, with 16 guns; the brig *Diligent*, with 10 guns; and the fire-ship *Pulvériseur*. A hospital ship and seven transports accompanied the squadron. The total number of crew members was 8,524, and the number of troops on board, including infantry, artillery, sepoys, and volunteers from Île de France and Bourbon, was 3,100.[377]

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BOOK XIII

The squadron captures the fifty-gun *Hannibal* on January 12, 1782. - Death of Count d'Orves. - Suffren appears before Madras. - Nine enemy vessels are anchored under the protection of the forts. - The English squadron sets sail. - Dispersal of our convoy. - Battle of February 17, 1782. - The French squadron anchors at Pondicherry and Porto-Novo. - Relations with Hyder-Ali. - Disembarkation of the French troops. - The squadron sets sail on March 23. - Suffren decides to remain in India. - Battle of April 12. - Both squadrons anchor on the coast. - The French go to Batacalo, and the English to Trincomalee. - The squadron goes to Tranquebar and Goudelour. Suffren set sail from Goudelour on July 3.

I

On January 20, 1782, our frigates reported a large ship that was chased by the squadron's best frigates. This vessel, which was lost from sight in the evening and sighted again the next day, was overtaken on the 22nd by the *Héros*. It was the fifty-gun ship the *Hannibal*, heading for Madras. After a brief engagement, the English captain lowered his flag. This vessel received a French crew and joined our squadron. It was learned from the *Hannibal* that the seventy-four-gun *Sultan* and the sixty-four-gun *Magnanime*, escorting a convoy carrying troops, were expected from England. Count d'Orves, whose health had been very poor for some time, died on February 9. This event placed the commander in command of twelve vessels. By order of the new general, some changes took place in the command of the ships of the squadron.[378]

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The *Orient*, of seventy-four, which was mounted by Count d'Orves, was given to M. de la Pallière, the *Sévère* to M. de Cillart, the English *Hannibal* to Lieutenant de Galle, the second in command of M. de Trémigon at the Battle of Praya, the frigate *La Pourvoyeuse* to M. de Beaulieu, the *Bellone* to M. de Ruyter, and the corvette *La Subtile* to M. de Galifet. Lieutenant de Moissac was appointed major of the squadron and flag captain to the commander-in-chief. Although Admiral Hughes had effected his junction with the *Montmouth*, the *Hero*, and the *Isis*, the English could only oppose us with nine vessels. Suffren resolved to appear unexpectedly off Madras and attack the enemy at anchor. The squadron sighted land north of that city; But, instead of the favorable breezes on which he counted, Suffren found southerly winds along the coast, and he did not appear off Madras until February 15. Nine vessels were anchored under the protection of the forts. Our landing in the north of Madras and the persistence of contrary winds had been two very fortunate circumstances for our adversaries. The English, coming from Trincomalee, had arrived in the harbor of Madras, in two divisions, the first, six vessels strong, on February 8, and the second the next day. Warned of our presence on the coast, Admiral Hughes had made all his defensive preparations at leisure. Suffren remained convinced that we would expose ourselves to failure by fighting the enemy in the position he occupied. Nevertheless, he wanted to know, on this point, the opinion of his captains, and he called them on board. Everyone was of the opinion that an attack, carried out under these conditions, would be all the more dangerous, as at that moment the winds were blowing from the open sea.[1]

1. Mr. Trublet de la Villejégu claims that the captain of the *Fine*, Lieutenant Perrier de Salvert, voted in council for an immediate attack on the English squadron. He adds that this officer very vigorously supported his opinion against the commander. The very clear statement of the squadron major, saying that all the captains were of the opinion not to attack the English, shows that Mr. de la Villejégu was mistaken. How, moreover, can one admit that a young officer commanding a frigate, that is to say a vessel that was not to go into action, did not agree with the opinion of a man enjoying the prestige that Suffren received, I do not say his position as commander-in-chief, but the audacious attack of the English squadron in the bay of Praya?[379]

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Suffren headed for Pondicherry, where he intended to take on water. During the night, our transports were lost from sight. When daylight broke, the British squadron was seen from the tops of the masts between our ships and the convoy.

Admiral Hughes, fearing that we might consider attacking Trincomalee, had set sail on the evening of the 16th. He was close behind the land, hoping to thwart our southward march. Suffren put up more sail and headed toward the English, who were beginning to chase our ships. The breeze was very light, and at five o'clock in the evening, our best ships were still a long way from the enemy. Shortly before sunset, the English ships rallied behind their admiral and formed line of battle, tacks to port. On the morning of the 17th, the English remained about two leagues southwest of the French army. Part of the day passed without the distance separating the two squadrons being appreciably changed. In the afternoon, squalls from the east-southeast, which our ships received first, allowed us to close in on our adversaries. At four o'clock in the evening, the *Héros*, which had taken the lead of the line, was cannonading the rear ship of the English army, and was extending the enemy to windward as far as the *Superb*. After fighting the flagship for some time, Suffren placed himself abeam of the *Eagle*. The two squadrons were arranged in the following order:

1. The English had taken the important position of Trincomalee from the Dutch on January 12, 1782.[380]

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ESCADRE FRANÇAISE.

Noms des bâtiments.	Nombre de canons.	Noms des capitaines.
Héros	74	Suffren. Moissac.
Orient	74	De la Pallière.
Sphinx	64	Du Chilleau.
Vengeur	64	Forbin.
Hannibal (anglais)	50	De Galle.
Annibal	74	De Tromelin.
Bizarre	64	La Landelle.
Artésien	64	Maurville.
Ajax	64	Bouvet.
Sévère	64	De Cillart.
Brillant	64	Saint-Félix.
Flamand	50	Cuverville.

ESCADRE ANGLAISE.

Noms des bâtiments.	Nombre de canons.	Noms des capitaines.
Worcester	64	Wood.
Burford	70	Peter Rainier.
Montmouth	64	Alms.
Eagle	64	Riddals.
Superb	74	Stevens. Sir Edward Hughes, contre-amiral.
Monarca	68	Gell.
Hero	74	Hawker.
Isis	50	Lumley.
Exeter	64	Reynolds Charles King, commodore.

The position taken by the commander-in-chief allowed us to fight six ships with the entire squadron, that is, with twelve vessels. Suffren intended to direct the greater part of his forces against the enemy rearguard. The latter, surrounded to windward and leeward, would have to be crushed before the first three English ships could come to their aid. The signals, ordering the *Annibal*, the *Ajax*, and the *Flamand* to overtake the enemy by the rear, and the army to fight within pistol range, went up to the masts of the *Héros*. With the leader of the French squadron abeam of the Eagle, the first three ships of the English line had no adversaries. However much Admiral Hughes wished to avoid a general battle, he could not escape the necessity of calling these ships to the aid of his rearguard. In this assumption, Suffren had placed himself at a sufficient distance from the enemy line so that the Worcester, the Burford and the Montmouth were unable to overtake him to windward. This maneuver, which was in apparent contradiction with the signal previously given to fight within pistol range, led the French captains to disregard this last order. They believed they were at their posts by remaining in the waters of the *Héros*. The *Annibal* and the *Ajax* not having seen the signal which ordered them to overtake the enemy by the tail, this movement was only executed by the Fleming. The *Annibal* being at the height of the rear of the English army, the ships placed behind it had no ships abeam. M. de Saint-Félix, very dissatisfied with his role, joined the Fleming. His ship was, of all our ships, the one which approached closest to the enemy. The captain of the *Annibal*, M. de Tromelin, fulfilled the duties of division chief. In this capacity, he had all the necessary authority to give orders to ships that were far from the fire. He had, moreover, received from the commander the very express invitation to do so, whenever circumstances required it.[381]

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However, he made no signal to the *Bizarre*, the *Artésien*, the *Ajax*, and the *Sévère*. These vessels, which were to windward of the line, continued to fire obliquely and at great distances at the English ships.[1]

Had it been possible to attack earlier, the errors and mistakes we have just mentioned would not have been of the same importance. The signal, made to the *Annibal* and the *Ajax*, to pass to leeward of the enemy, hoisted again aboard the *Héros*, would have been seen by these two ships. The captains of the *Sévère*, the *Ajax*, the *Artésien*, and the *Bizarre*, either of their own accord or following orders from the commander-in-chief, would have positioned themselves to take a more active part in the combat. By the time we had joined the enemy, the misused time was irreparably lost. The approach of nightfall, the weakness of the breeze, and the failure to carry out the order to fight within pistol range, led Suffren to postpone the matter until the following day. Around 6:30, the *Héros* held the wind, and the other vessels imitated its maneuver. Until complete darkness, our vessels exchanged cannonballs with the English. Several enemy vessels emerged from this encounter badly damaged. The *Exeter*, to use the expression used by Admiral Hughes, was in the position of a shipwrecked vessel. The *Superb*, in addition to considerable damage to its masts, had five feet of water in its hold.

1. Suffren's report on the battle of February 17 is accompanied by a sketch showing the position of the two squadrons at 4:30. Five ships, the *Héros*, carrying its flag, the *Orient*, captain La Pallière, the *Sphinx*, captain du Chilleau, the *Vengeur*, captain de Forbin, the English *Hannibal*, captain de Galle, form a regular line. The following ship is the *Annibal*, captain de Tromelin. Opposite the name of this ship, we read the annotation "very far away". The *Bizarre*, captain La Landelle, the *Artésien*, captain de Maurville, the *Ajax*, captain Bouvet, and the *Sévère*, captain Cillart, are placed behind and to windward of the *Annibal*. The names of these four ships are accompanied by the mention in disorder and very far away.[382]

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The *Monarca*, the *Hero*, and the *Isis* had suffered, but to a lesser extent. The enemy had 127 men out of action in this affair. The captain of the *Exeter* was killed, and that of the *Superb* died of wounds he had received during the action. With the exception of the *Brillant*, which suffered eighteen dead and forty wounded, less from our adversaries fire than from the explosion of a crate of grenades, the French vessels lost few men.[1] Some writers have claimed that, on February 17, the French squadron advanced on the enemy in two columns, one aiming at the center and the other at the English rearguard. We have seen that this was not the maneuver of our squadron. Suffren had managed to attack six ships with twelve, that is, to render three enemy vessels useless. The means he employed to achieve this result are well worth those attributed to him. In all cases, in all things, we must stick to the truth.[2.]

In order to leave no doubt about the mode of attack of our squadron, we will quote the following passage from the report that Suffren addressed to the minister. "I owe you a particular account of the battle of February 17, on which the fate of India depended. I was to destroy the English squadron, less by superiority than by the advantageous disposition in which I attacked it. I attacked the last ship and extended the English line to the sixth ship. I thereby rendered three of them useless, so that we were twelve against six. I began the battle at three thirty in the afternoon, taking the lead and giving the signal to form some line, otherwise I would not have engaged.

1. The squadron major's journal lists the number of dead at thirty, but does not indicate the number of wounded.

2. These writers have evidently succumbed to the desire to establish a connection between the day of February 17 and the battles of Dominica and Trafalgar.[383]

At four o'clock, I signaled three ships to overtake by the tail, and the squadron to approach within pistol range. This signal, although repeated, was not executed. I did not set an example to hold in check the three leading ships which, by turning, would have overtaken me. However, except for the Brillant, which overtook by the tail, no ship was as close as mine, nor suffered so many hits." We will add that the maneuver of February 17 was not dictated by circumstances. Suffren wrote to M. de Tromelin on February 6, 1782: "The false alarm of the day before yesterday prevents me from discussing with you some matters relating to the encounter with the English. If we are lucky enough to be to windward, as there are only eight or nine at most, my plan is to overtake them by the tail." Let us suppose that your division is from the rear, you will see, by your position, what number of ships will outflank the enemy line and you will signal them to double. If we are to leeward and your ships can, by forcing sails, overtake the enemy, whether they are not attacked at all, or are only attacked from afar and weakly, you could make them turn to overtake to windward. Finally, in all cases, I ask you to order your division to carry out the maneuvers that you believe to be best to ensure the success of the action. The capture of Trincomalee and that of Negapatam and perhaps of all of Ceylon must make us desire a general affair."[1]

1. The squadron major summarizes the day's maneuvers and his commander's thoughts in his journal as follows: "At four o'clock, as we arrived abeam of the *Superb*, the signal was given to the *Annibal*, the *Ajax*, and the *Flamand* to overtake the enemy by the tail to put them between two fires, and to approach the enemy within pistol range. We formed a line with the *Sphinx*, the *Vengeur*, the *Hannibal* (English), and the *Orient*, which came to take up position after us. We were still fighting the English army, and we remained in a position to fall upon the enemy advance guard, if it had made any movement, either by turning towards us or by arriving downwind to relieve its rearguard. The general hoped, with good reason, that the last enemy ships would be crushed, but few of our ships approached the enemy very closely."[384]

The skillful arrangements made by Suffren and our numerical superiority assured us a decisive victory on February 17. However, due to the lateness of the day and the weakness and unevenness of the breeze, which made maneuvers slow and difficult, we could only take advantage of our advantages if we acted with promptness and resolution. Five out of twelve captains did not understand this situation. Suffren considered sending back to France the captains with whom he was dissatisfied. The fear of not finding officers capable of commanding ships made him back down from this decision.[1] He complained to the minister very vigorously about Division Chief Tromelin, who had left the ships positioned near him without direction. "Being at the head," he told him, "I could not clearly see what was happening behind. I had instructed M. de Tromelin to send signals to the ships that would be near him, but he only repeated mine without having them executed." He denounced to Marshal de Castries the conduct of Messrs. de Maurville, de la Landelle, Bouvet and de Cillart who had remained in the line, although they had no adversaries. M. de Maurville was particularly guilty of not having taken a more active part in the combat. He had been warned, by a notice, that the intention of the commander-in-chief was to attack with the copper-lined vessels. Now, the *Artésien* was one of this number, and, moreover, she was a good sailmaker. After having pointed out the officers whose lack of vision and initiative had deprived us of important advantages, Suffren drew the minister's attention to those who had distinguished themselves. The *Brillant* and the *Flamand*, he wrote, commanded by Messrs. de Saint-Félix and de Cuverville, overtook by the tail. They deserve praise, especially M. de Saint-Félix, who had not received the order.[2]

1. He said in one of his letters to the minister: "It is still necessary to use them, because among the subordinates, they would not be replaced."

2. We read in M. Cunat's History of Suffren: The *Ajax* and the *Flamand*, by a special signal, were ordered to fight the enemy from downwind. The latter covered itself with sails to accelerate its heavy and ponderous march. The *Ajax*, in the rear, also let the ship bear away, but, when the *Annibal* signaled him to resume his position, Bouvet obeyed, and, in this way, he did not respond to the order given to him by Suffren and did not carry it out. The *Brillant*, which de Saint-Félix mounted, requested to replace this vessel; he obtained it, and immediately coordinated their combat dispositions with de Cuverville. They remained without success, because the enemy's rearguard, to prevent them, did not stop arriving. The *Brillant* and the *Flamand*, by this movement of the English ships which they had not anticipated, hindered each other." There are two very clear statements concerning the *Ajax* and the *Brillant*. Let us see what is true in them. Let us say first that the *Brillant* did not receive the order to pass to leeward of the enemy, and that it did not request it. The ship captain de Saint-Félix executed this maneuver of his own accord. Suffren's report leaves no doubt on this point. Thus, the assertion concerning the *Brillant* is not exact. The same must be said of the one concerning the *Ajax*. The *Annibal* did not have to recall the *Ajax*, for the very simple reason that the latter vessel, not having seen the signal addressed to it, made no movement. It is needless to add that, if such an event had occurred, Suffren would not have forgotten to inform the minister. It would, moreover, be rather singular to reproach M. de Tromelin at the same time for having recalled the *Ajax* and for not having made any signal to the ships which were near him. This last accusation is the one which the commander-in-chief brings against M. de Tromelin. Mr. Cunat had borrowed this version from Mr. Trublet de la Villejégu, but he adds, on his own account: Reliable people told me, in Pondicherry, and this only twenty-five years after the event, that Mr. Bouvet, upset by his conduct, kept himself apart the next day in the *Héros* council chamber, where the captains had been summoned, not daring to approach the general. Mr. Bouvet, said Suffren, advancing towards him, your zeal and your talents were noted to me, but the example of subordination that you gave yesterday has finally made you known. How much it must have cost you to withdraw at the moment when you were about to take part in the combat! I will see to it that you do not suffer any more unpleasantness. Mr. Bouvet thanked his chief with expressions of a moved heart; but his great age and his infirmities prevented him from keeping the commitment he tacitly entered into. "What becomes of this story, when we know that Mr. de Tromelin did not recall Ajax. However, this legend has been acceptedée, and we still find it in most of the books made on this campaign.[385]

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The latter fought at close quarters, and his ship suffered eighteen killed and forty wounded. I request a pension of eight hundred livres on Saint-Louis for M. de Saint-Félix, and a high salary for M. de Cuverville. The rewards granted immediately excite emulation and raise the esteem of the leaders who obtain them.[386]

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Messrs. de la Pallière, du Chilleau, and de Forbin held their posts well. M. de Galle conducted himself on the small *Hannibal*, as he had done on the large one, as he always will, that is to say, very well."

II

Suffren had called off the fighting on February 17, with the intention of resuming it the next day. During the night, the weather was dark and squally, and when day broke, the English were no longer in sight. What was happening was all the more unfortunate because Suffren found himself momentarily unable to pursue the enemy. Our ships were out of water, and, moreover, it was urgent to know what had become of our convoy. The squadron set sail for Pondicherry, where it anchored on February 19. The same day, M. Pivron de Morlat, our envoy to the nabob, came aboard the *Héros*. He brought the commander information on the state of affairs in India and more particularly on the state of our relations with Hyder-Ali. The events that had taken place during the year 1781 had not been favorable to the cause that the nabob defended with more ardor and sincerity than his allies. British diplomacy had succeeded in sowing disunity among the confederates. The purely defensive attitude of the Marhat chiefs and the Soubab of the Decan had allowed the English to send the greater part of their forces to Madras. General Sir Eyre Coot had defeated the Mysorean army in several encounters. Nevertheless, the East India Company, which was determined not to leave us any allies, offered the nabob very advantageous peace conditions. Hyder-Ali was personally very eager to continue the war, but he was obliged to spare his entourage who pressed him to accept the proposals of our enemies.[387]

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M. de Morlat had been given the special mission of preventing the Sultan from negotiating with the English. He had succeeded so far, but he considered it impossible to achieve this result from now on if we did not come to the aid of the Nabob. The latter had experienced a very keen disappointment the previous year when the French squadron, after spending a few days on the coast, returned to the Isle of France. He had been deluded with the hope that Suffren was bringing the landing force announced by Count d'Orves. If we withdraw, said our envoy, without entering into communication with the Sultan, the latter, convinced that he could have no confidence in our words, would make peace with the English. Suffren had decided to remain in India since the day he took command of the squadron. No effort was necessary to convince him of the necessity of uniting with Hyder-Ali. This alliance was, in his eyes, the starting point for any serious action on the Coromandel coast. However, he saw himself, with great regret, deprived of freedom of movement, at the moment when it would have been necessary to pursue the enemy, in order to fight him before the arrival of the *Magnanime* and the *Sultan*. If Admiral Hughes, wishing to avoid an encounter, withdrew to Trincomalee, we could establish ourselves south of Ceylon with a good chance of intercepting these two vessels. However, taking into consideration, on the one hand, the observations presented by Mr. de Morlat, and, on the other hand, the desire expressed by General Duchemin to be put ashore with his troops, Suffren gave up putting to sea. Wanting to get closer to Hyder-Ali, he led the squadron to the anchorage of Porto-Novo. Messrs. de Morlat, de Moissac and Lieutenant-Colonel de Canaples went to see the Sultan. It was agreed between our officers and the nabob's agents that the French, to whom two thousand cavalry and three thousand infantry from the Indian army would be added, would form an independent corps. Hyder-Ali promised to feed our soldiers and provide provisions for the squadron whenever it was anchored on the coast and within range of his camp.[388]

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He was to give us money as and when we needed it. Finally, he offered to relinquish to France, upon the conclusion of peace, a territory as large as we could desire. These proposals lacked the clarity and precision that would have been necessary in a negotiation of this importance. The Sultan made no formal commitment on any point, but circumstances did not allow us to be very demanding. At the same time as Messrs. de Moissac, de Canaples, and de Morlat, as Suffren wrote to the minister a few days later, English envoys were present at Hyder-Ali's camp, offering money, while we were asking for it. General Duchemin and the squadron leader, confident in the nabob's good faith, decided to disembark the troops. This operation was completed on March 22, and on the 23rd, the squadron headed south in search of the convoy vessels dispersed during the day of February 16. Suffren sent a ship to Europe to inform the minister of the events that had occurred since the day the squadron left the Isle of France. "I am firmly resolved," he wrote to him, "not to leave the coast until the winter. The English, after the meeting of the *Sultan* and the *Magnanime*, will be at least equal in strength. But, unless the squadron is absolutely unable to remain due to serious damage or lack of supplies, it will not abandon the coast. I promised the nabob this and I will keep my word." Suffren demanded the necessary means of action to make his presence on the Coromandel coast profitable to our interests. The Sultan's army, which numbered no less than one hundred thousand men, could, if supported by French troops, fight with advantage against the English. The successes won by Hyder-Ali would have strengthened the very shaken alliance of the Indian princes. Consequently, he requested that two battalions of infantry, one battalion of artillery, a field train, bombs and mortars be sent to India.[389]

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He asked the minister to notify him, by ships sent directly to the Coromandel coast, of the departure of the French and English convoys, so that he could intercept the former and ensure the arrival of the latter. Finally, he insisted that he be given some copper-lined frigates with which he could destroy the enemy's trade. Suffren approached M. de Souillac to obtain that the existing equipment and personnel at the Isle de France be placed at his disposal. He wrote to him: "The squadron is short of more than six hundred men. I bought thirty Kaffirs at Tranquebar, at seventy pagodas; I am trying to hire lascars, but these are only very short-term means. So send us men: 1st sailors; 2nd soldiers; 3rd volunteers; 4th blacks." We were very pleased with the latter in the battle of February 17th."

When the squadron left Porto-Novo, the supplies and spare parts were almost completely consumed. Six thousand piastres, captured at the Isle of France, and the supplies embarked on the convoy, these were our only resources. However, at that time, Suffren was not exactly informed of the number of transport vessels captured by the enemy. The French forces were perfectly capable of fighting the English admiral's squadron, even though it had been reinforced by the *Magnanime* and the *Sultan*. What had seemed impossible until then was resupplying ships on a coast where we had neither ports nor stores. It was convinced in Paris that a squadron operating on the Coromandel Coast was forced to sail for the Isle of France on the day when it only had the supplies necessary to return to its point of departure. Suffren did not shy away from a determination that ran counter to received ideas and that only success could justify.[390]

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III

On the morning of April 8, the French squadron was joined by a merchant ship that had separated from it the day before to go to Batavia. The captain announced that he had sighted twelve or fifteen large vessels heading north-northeast. Suffren set a course in that direction, and during the day the next day, our frigates spotted eleven vessels. This was the British squadron, which had been joined on March 30 by the *Sultan* and the *Magnanime*. On April 10 and 11, due to the light breeze, our copper-lined vessels were the only ones that managed to close in on the English.[1] During the night of the 11th to the 12th, Admiral Hughes let the steam bear away in order to position himself to enter Trincomalee. At daybreak, the enemy was sighted to leeward, at a distance of about three leagues. Around nine o'clock in the morning, the winds continuing to blow from the east-southeast, our best sailors found themselves in position to cannonade the rear ships of the English army. Admiral Hughes, then determining to fight, formed the line of battle, tacks to starboard, under small sails. This maneuver was imitated by the French, and the two squadrons ran parallel to each other. At eleven o'clock, our line being well formed, Suffren signaled to let them arrive as far as the west-southwest by a movement all at once. Our ships did not keep to the prescribed line of bearing, and the vanguard, composed of the best sailing ships, arrived first within range of the enemy. At one o'clock, the leading ships of the English fleet began to fire on the *Vengeur* and the *Artésien*.

1. On the 10th, two merchant ships were captured and burned in full view of the English.[391]

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These two vessels, having come across to respond to our adversaries' fire, were immediately ordered to bear away.[1] Suffren, who wanted decisive action, continued on his way, receiving, without reply, the shots the enemy directed at his ship. When he was within pistol range of the *Superb*, he hauled to windward, and the signal to begin firing appeared at the top of his mainmast. Since Admiral Hughes had only eleven ships, the *Bizarre*, in accordance with the arrangements made by the Commander-in-Chief, was to engage the rear ship of the English fleet on the quarter, and overtake it from below the wind, if circumstances permitted. By the time the first cannon shots were heard, our poor sailors were behind their posts. Taking their cue from the letter and not the spirit of the Commander-in-Chief's orders, the captains of these vessels luffed at the same time as the ships in front of them. The result was that the French line formed a curve whose extremities were represented, in the vanguard, by the *Vengeur* and the *Artésien*, and, in the rearguard, by the *Bizarre*, the *Ajax*, and the *Sévère*. As a consequence of this position, these vessels were very far from their corresponding ships in the enemy line. The damage that the *Héros* received at the start of the action did not allow her to stay abreast of the *Superb*. Unable to mask her topsails in time, the arms of which had been cut off, she ran ahead and only stopped abeam of the *Montmouth*.[2]

1. This signal was repeated a quarter of an hour later. At 1:35, the *Héros* signaled the fleet to engage the enemy within pistol range.

2. We read in the *History of the Bailiff of Suffren*, by Mr. Cunat: who had stopped the *Héros* abeam of the *Superb*, which Admiral Hughes was aboard, was victoriously fighting it, when, suddenly, he saw with astonishment our two leading ships, the *Vengeur* and the *Artésien*, overtaking those of the enemy army, and, although off the English, reporting a depth of fourteen fathoms. The commander, astonished, then quickly glanced at the tail ships, and noticed that several of these vessels had no enemies abeam. He immediately pressed on, reluctantly abandoning the *Superb*, and went alongside the *Montmouth*. This account is not accurate. It was against Suffren's wishes that the *Héros* overtook the *Superb*. The squadron major says in his journal: "The general's intention was to fight the admiral, but severed arms prevented us from hoisting our topsails, so we overtook him and ran abeam of his forward sailor, whom we fought." Finally, when the *Vengeur* signaled fourteen fathoms, the *Héros*, as will be seen later, had ceased fighting the *Montmouth*. It was not three-quarters past one, but three-thirty, which is very different. In other words, there is no connection between the *Héros's* maneuver and the conduct of the captains of the *Vengeur* and the *Artésien*.[392]

At 2:40, this vessel had lost its mainmast and mizzenmast. The *Héros*, which had fought the *Superb* before facing the *Montmouth*, was itself heavily damaged. It fell to leeward, and for a moment, it cannonaded the *Superb* with its retreating guns. Suffren then gave the private signal to his stern sailor, and the general signal to the rearguard to bear away. Although the *Orient* had suffered greatly, Captain de la Pallière immediately executed the commander-in-chief's order.[1] He was followed by M. de Saint-Félix, who, in this circumstance, showed the spirit of initiative he had demonstrated on February 17. The maneuver of these two vessels freed the *Héros*, which continued to fight until the *Orient* and the *Brillant* placed themselves between it and the enemy. The English admiral passed to leeward of the dismasted ship and rejoined his vanguard. The forward movement of some of our rearguard vessels made the *Montmouth's* situation very perilous. To save this vessel and reestablish his battle line, which was in great disorder, Admiral Hughes signaled at 3:40 to tack luff for luff all at once. The winds, which had been northeast at the beginning of the action, had shifted to the north, and the two squadrons had closed in on land.

1. The *Orient* was signaling inconvenience at the very moment he received this order.[393]

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The *Vengeur* having signaled fourteen fathoms of water, the French took tack to the other side, tacking downwind, all at the same time.[1]

While the ships of both squadrons executed this evolution, the *Montmouth* remained motionless between the two lines. Suffren signaled the fleet to heave to sail, and he gave the order, by voice, to the captain of the *Artésien* to head for the disabled ship. At this moment, those of our ships that had fought closely against the center of the English fleet were not far from the *Montmouth*. Suffren might have believed that this day would leave a trophy in his hands, but the skill of one of the English captains dashed this hope. This officer sent a line to the *Montmouth*, and towed it out of the fire. After the two squadrons had tacked, the English found themselves ahead of the French. The dilapidation of a large number of vessels and the various twists and turns of the battle had thrown both lines into disorder. The ships of our rearguard, which had become our vanguard, and a few vessels of our center were the only ones capable of fighting. At 5:40, the small topmast of the *Héros* having broken, the general hoisted his flag on the *Ajax*. Due to the calm and the variations of the breeze, the two squadrons moved away from each other, and the order was given to cease firing. Nevertheless, the combat continued between the vessels that were within cannon range until darkness fell. The proximity of land preoccupied the two admirals, who would have liked to get away from it before nightfall, but this maneuver was not easy to execute. The English, whose progress was hampered by the *Montmouth*, anchored at 7:00. Although the French had taken the most favorable tack to reach the open sea, the *Ajax* struck twice.

1. The *Vengeur* had just signaled fourteen fathoms of water. The general signaled for everyone to tack downwind at the same time. This maneuver, after a heated fight, could not have been either prompt or general. We tacked, aboard the *Héros*, with the help of a boat.[394]

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On the other hand, Suffren feared that the *Héros*, the *Brillant*, and the *Orient* were unable to follow him. Consequently, at eight o'clock in the evening, he signaled the fleet to anchor where it was. The commander-in-chief's concern about the *Héros* was legitimate. This ship, after having futilely attempted to veer away from the English squadron, which was being carried by a light northeast breeze, had dropped its anchor at seven-thirty. From the deck of the *Héros*, the voices of the crew of the nearest English ship could be distinctly heard. All the boats having been smashed during the battle, M. de Moissac could not communicate with the commander-in-chief. A boat from the squadron, manned by an officer, having appeared alongside, he hastened to take advantage of this circumstance to inform the general of his position.[1] Suffren ordered the *Fine*, which was still under sail, to lead the *Héros* into the middle of the French squadron. Despite the darkness of the night, this frigate presented itself in front of this vessel; and it sent it a boat with a mooring line. This was turned, when the ship the *Orient*, passing between the *Fine* and the *Héros*, broke the towline. Captain de la Pallière hailed the *Héros*, and warned him that the *Fine* had boarded an English vessel.[2]

1. At seven thirty, the *Héros* having tried in vain to tack with the wind behind and the wind ahead, the ship completely unrigged and unable to be repaired in a short time, with the foremast and all its sails and maneuvers dependent on it on the foremast shrouds, I was forced, by the shallow water and still drifting, to anchor in seven fathoms, coral bottom, in the middle of the English squadron and close enough to one of its vessels to distinguish its voices. The wind still northeast, almost calm. At that moment, an officer came on board to inquire whether it was not we who had fired three cannon shots. I told him that I believed it was the English admiral, whose signal it might be to anchor. I asked him to inform the general of our unpleasant position.

2. We did indeed hear English and French voices, says M. de Moissac in his journal, arguing, but everything happened in words.[395]

The jolt produced by the breaking of the hawse separated the ship and the frigate. Shortly after, the latter signaled that it was aground. M. de Moissac, despairing of being rescued, had a grommet struck on his cable. He stood ready to use it, either to bear away, in the event that the wind should become favorable, or to present a broadside to the enemy, if, as he suspected, he were attacked the following day. It was the first of these predictions that came true. At 9:30, the breeze having risen from the southwest, Captain de Moissac had his cable cut, and at 10:30, he dropped the anchor abeam of the *Ajax*. As for the *Fine*, after extinguishing a fire that had begun on board, she refloated and rejoined the fleet. This was not the only incident of that dark and rainy night. M. de Goy, ensign, adjutant of the squadron, was on board the *Fine*, at the moment when this frigate had approached the *Isis*. He embarked in his boat to return to the *Ajax*, but his skipper, instead of taking him aboard the ship that Suffren was boarding, accosted the English flagship. M. de Goy and his men were taken prisoner. It has been said that the captain of the *Fine* had the thought of abandoning his frigate, at the moment when it was alongside the *Isis*. Suffren, in his letters to the minister, does not mention this fact which would certainly have attracted his attention. There is no mention of it in the journal of the major of the squadron. However, M. de Moissac carefully relates all the incidents of the night relating to the frigate the *Fine*[1]. This accusation, dishonoring the memory of this officer, is not supported by any evidence and must be rejected.[2]

1. M. de Moissac says: "The jolt caused by the *Orient*, by cutting the hawse, separated the two vessels. The *Fine* ran aground a little further out, made the signal of inconvenience, set fire to its shrouds, extinguished it, and regrounded. M. de Goy, ensign, adjutant, was on the *Fine*. He had carried orders to several vessels when the *Fine* collided with the *Isis*. He embarked in his boat, but instead of going aboard the *Ajax*, he went aboard the *Superb*."

2. We read in the *History of the Bailiff of Suffren*, by Mr. Cunat: "Mr. de Salvert, stunned, seeing no way out of this boarding, and fearing an invasion by the English, had his boat brought in to save himself. Mr. Sébire de Beauchêne was invited by Mr. de Salvert to get into his boat and follow him in his retreat. This officer, Saint-Malo, who had distinguished himself in the battle of the Belle-Poule, refused. His good demeanor encouraged the more timid and contributed to the salvation of the *Fine*. Mr. Cunat borrowed this version from Mr. de Villejégu. The latter was obviously acting in good faith when he reported a rumor that had perhaps circulated within the squadron and that he believed to be true, but good faith, in such a case, is hardly a mitigating circumstance. When making an accusation of this nature, it is necessary to attach evidence. It is, moreover, easy to see where his error comes from. He knows that M. de Goy was on board the *Superb*, but he does not know that this officer came from the *Fine*, when he mistook the English flagship for the *Ajax*. It was the presence of this officer's boat along the *Fine*, during the boarding of this frigate with the *Isis*, which gave rise to the rumor that M. de la Villejégu accepted too easily, and which most of those who wrote on the India campaign reported after him.[396]

When day broke, the two squadrons were anchored on the open coast, two miles apart. They would probably have been lost if the wind had blown fresh from the open sea during the night. "Six hours of bad weather," wrote Suffren, "could have lost the squadron. My only consolation was that the enemy would suffer the same fate. At daybreak, we found ourselves anchored two-thirds of a league from the English squadron (at 8° 8' north latitude, on the east coast of Ceylon, near the island of Provedien), and each was busy repairing their damage."[1] Suffren sent a member of parliament aboard the *Superb* to propose to Admiral Hughes the exchange of M. de Goy.

1. Some historians claim that, on the morning of the 13th, Suffren had the idea of firing on the English vessels that were within range of the squadron. He did not pursue this project, some say, for fear of initiating a general affair. Others, on the contrary, say that he did not do so because this cannonade would have led to only a partial combat. Suffren's report puts everyone in agreement. There was not a moment of question of firing on the ships closest to us. How can we believe, moreover, that we would have used up our powder by sending cannonballs to ships that were eighteen cables away? The squadron major says: Some English ships, anchored within full cannon range of our squadron, are setting sail. The ships anchored too close to the rocks or in too shallow waters, are changing anchorage.[397]

The English admiral replied that his instructions did not allow him to grant this request.[1] On the 17th, the French had completed the most urgent work and were ready to set sail. The next day, with the English making no move, Suffren decided to set sail. After remaining in sight of the enemy on the 19th and part of the 20th, he set sail for Batacalo, the rendezvous assigned to his transports. The commander felt he should justify himself to the minister for not having attacked Admiral Hughes in the position it occupied. He did so, giving the following reasons for his conduct: 1st The uncertainty of the bottom mixed with coral, since, off the English coast, the *Ajax*, the *Orient*, and the *Fine* had run aground on April 12; 2nd In these kinds of undertakings, everything is to be lost if one does not succeed; 3rd I currently only have enough munitions for one battle; 4th few men; 5th no spare means to repair the rigging; 6th the squadron is missing at least twelve spare topmasts; 7th I am going to meet those in Galles where I will find rope, some munitions, and men; 8th to attempt this with any hope of success requires ability and willpower, and I have certainly tested them too much to risk everything like this."

The day of April 12th had not been, like that of February 17th, a simple skirmish. There had been serious fighting, and the losses on both sides were considerable. We make them known in the following table, which shows the battle line of the two squadrons.

1. Suffren had a particular esteem for M. de Goy. He said to the minister, in a letter containing the request for the rank of lieutenant of the ship for this officer: He is a young man who is in the middle of the fire of a cold [cool under fire] to please those who see him.[398]

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ESCADRE FRANÇAISE.

Noms des bâtiments.	Nombre de canons.	Noms des capitaines.	Tués.	Blessés.
Vengeur	64	Forbin.	»	2
Artésien	64	Maurville	12	20
Hannibal (anglais)	50	De Galle	6	19
Sphinx	64	Du Chilleau	22	74
Héros	74	Suffren Moissac	12	38
L'Orient	74	La Pallière	25	71
Brillant	64	Saint-Félix	15	33
Sévère	64	Villeneuve-Cillart	12	20
Ajax	64	Bouvet	4	11
Annibal	74	De Tromelin	14	29
Flamand	50	Cuverville	3	12
Bizarre	64	La Landelle	12	28
Totaux des tués et des blessés[1]			137	357

1. Messrs. de Bourdeilles, naval lieutenant; de Bielke, Lamerchienna (Swedish officer); de Rochemore, de Cuers, ensigns; Le Vasseur de Séligny, frigate lieutenant; de Barence, naval guard, were among the dead. Among the wounded were Messrs. de Cillart and de Galle, naval captains; Gouler, Pastrascour, auxiliary officers; and d'Aigremont, naval guard.[399]

ESCADRE ANGLAISE.

Noms des bâtiments.	Nombre de canons.	Noms des capitaines.	Tues.	Blessés.
Exeter	64	King	4	40
Sultan	74	Watt	»	9
Eagle	64	Reddal	»	22
Burford	70	Rainier	6	36
Montmouth	64	Alms	45	102
Superb	74	Edward Hughes	59	96
Monarca	68	Gell	7	28
Magnanime	70	Wolseley	»	7
Isis	50	Lunley	6	51
Héro	74	Hawker	2	13
Worcester	64	Charles King	8	26
Totaux des tués et des blessés			137	430

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With the ships of the two squadrons positioned during the battle in the order indicated above, it is easy to identify those that had borne the brunt of the battle. It will be noted that the English ships, being to leeward, could not approach ours. In the report he sent to the minister on the battle of April 12, Suffren did not make any special complaints against Messrs. de Maurville, Forbin, de Cillart, Bouvet, and de la Landelle, but he noted the almost insignificant role played by the ships they commanded. After stating that M. de Tromelin, the division commander of whom he had had cause to complain on February 17, had done his duty, he noted the fine conduct of Messrs. de Saint-Félix and de la Pallière. As for the commander of the *Sphinx,* Captain de Chilleau, Suffren gave unreserved praise for the services he had rendered on April 12. "If all the officers had done as he did," he wrote to Marshal de Castries, "the English squadron would no longer exist."

On April 30, our ships anchored in Batacalo Bay, on the eastern coast of the island of Ceylon. The day before, Suffren had communicated with the fireship *Pulvériseur*, sent to search for him by the captain of the *Bellone,* who was at Pointe de Galles with the convoy. The *Pulvériseur* was carrying dispatches from the Isle of France by a Dutch ship.[1]

IV

When Suffren opened the letters addressed to his predecessor, he experienced a very unpleasant surprise.

1. The Dutch ship was carrying the duplicate of these dispatches. The first dispatch had been sent by the corvette *Expédition*, which had been captured by the English.[400]

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The minister, announcing the imminent arrival of a convoy escorted by two vessels, the *Illustre*, of seventy-four, and the *Saint-Michel*, of sixty, ordered the Count of Orves to return to the Isle of France. He was to leave in April, after having stocked up on provisions and repaired his ships. If such precise orders had reached him in February, Suffren would have hesitated to disobey them. Receiving them at the end of April, he considered it a duty of his position not to carry them out. The dispatches brought by the *Pulvériseur* raised other difficulties and added to the commander's perplexities. What course of action would M. de Souillac adopt, who could not be unaware of the court's new instructions? Would he send the convoy to the Coromandel coast, or would he hold it in the harbor of Port Louis, thinking that Suffren would obey the minister's orders? "The King's intention," Suffren wrote to M. de Souillac, "was that the squadron should return to the Isle of France in March, in order to set off again in April with a reunited and well-repaired force. This is no longer possible. Before I go to the Coromandel coast (it is May 1st) and Hyder-Ali can be persuaded to let our troops embark, until they have marched and I have been able to return to Ceylon, it is a matter of at least forty-five days, the crossing about forty, the time for refits at least as many, the crossing (for the return) thirty. Recapitulation: Forty-five days to go and pick up our troops from the coast and bring them back to Ceylon, forty days of crossing, forty-five of refitting, thirty of crossing to return here: total one hundred and sixty. So that is six months lost, and God knows what the enemy can undertake during this time. It would be very misinterpreting the intentions of the King and yours, if I undertook, at the end of April, what you had planned for the end of February, and if, on the repeated assurances not to leave the coast, and if, on the certainty that you had, from the *Bons-Amis* and from the *Chasseur*[1], that the corvette[2] had not arrived, you had judged it too late, and that, at my request, you had sent the convoy off, what will become of me at the Isle of France?

1. These two ships had been sent to the Isle of France after the battle of February 17.
2. This is the *Expédition* which, as we have said, had fallen into the hands of the English.[401]

I take this course, although the only good one, with regret, because, as it will not be to anyone's taste, I will be disapproved of by everyone. Moreover, if I left the coast after a fight, Sir Hughes, whom I defeated twice, on February 17 and April 12, would not fail to say that I had been beaten. What affects me most is the lack of personnel and the number of sick, but two crossings of twelve hundred leagues would not restore the crews."

The transports that were at Pointe de Galles arrived at Batacalo, under the command of the *Bellone* and the *Sylphide*. The separation of the convoy had not had the unfortunate consequences that Suffren feared. Our losses were reduced to two ships, the *Lauriston* and the *Toscan*, captured by the English, the first at sea, and the second in the harbor of Négapatam, where he had sought refuge, unaware that this place was in the hands of the enemy. A few Dutch ships, dispatched by the governor of Ceylon, brought food and ammunition. The frigate *Bellone* had captured, in one of its sorties, thirteen merchant ships and a small corvette. The latter was given a crew and increased the number of light vessels in the squadron. With the money from the sale of the prizes, Suffren had the food, ammunition, and supplies of all kinds in the stores of the East India Company purchased at Tranquebar, a Danish trading post. One of the ships seized by *Bellone* was sold for five hundred thousand francs. Despite the need for supplies, Suffren neglected nothing related to the military question.[402]

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Positioned south of the enemy, who had withdrawn to Trincomalee, we were in a position to capture any ships coming from Europe or Bombay and heading for Madras. Our frigates were cruising offshore, and a division of the squadron was always ready to sail. On May 13, five sails having been reported, the *Héros*, the *Vengeur*, the *Artésien*, the *Sphinx*, and the *Annibal* set sail. At sunset, we were still more than two leagues from these ships. Suffren, not deeming it prudent to place the English squadron between the vessels he had with him and those anchored at Batacalo, gave chase. It was learned some time later that the ships being pursued were coming from Bombay with supplies, equipment, and ammunition.

The French squadron set sail on June 3 for Tranquebar, where it was to encounter several Dutch ships laden with supplies. She arrived at her destination on the 5th, after passing the day before in front of Trincomalee, where the English were completing their repairs. Our new position allowed us to intercept the ships sent from Madras to the English squadron. On June 8, a division composed of the vessels *Sphinx* and *Artésien*, and the frigates *Fine* and *Bellone*, returned to the anchorage bringing a prize, the transport *Raikes*, loaded with food and equipment. Five ships, including this last vessel, had left Madras with supplies for Trincomalee. The commander learned, with the greatest regret, that we had let two of these vessels escape. On the evening of June 5, our cruisers were chasing two ships that had been sighted at sunset. The chase continued, and, due to their unequal course, our ships separated. The *Bellone* and the *Fine* were ahead, then came the *Artésien*, and behind her the *Sphinx*. The frigates had come close enough to these two vessels to recognize a ship and a brig. Such was the situation when, around eleven o'clock, the *Artésien*, which was about to join the *Bellone* and the *Fine*, reduced sail and disappeared. [403]

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The captain of this vessel had made way for the *Sphinx*, which he was about to lose sight of. Messrs. de Beaulieu and de Salvert had followed the enemy under small sails, lighting fires and firing rockets to indicate their position. Shortly before daybreak, no longer seeing the *Sphinx* and the *Artésien*, and unaware, moreover, of the division commander's intentions, they had moved away. It was later learned that these two vessels were the brig *Rodney* and the ship the *San Carlos*, both armed en flûte. Suffren was all the more irritated with the captain of the *Artésien* because the capture of these two ships would have been of inestimable value to us. A few days later, our cruisers brought two transports loaded with provisions to Tranquebar. One of them, the *Résolution*[1], carried sixteen cannons and a copper-lined detail. The squadron anchored on June 22nd, off the town of Goudelour, captured from the English on April 3rd, 1782. In the harbor, there was a merchant ship loaded with provisions, and a large transport, belonging to the East Indies Company, which had been captured by the *Fine*. The latter had on board sixteen artillery officers, gunners, siege guns, powder, and munitions of war. A few days later, a large English ship, carrying thirty cannons, loaded with rice and wheat, fell into our hands. The activity of our cruisers kept our squadron alive. Suffren had come to Goudelour to supplement his supplies, drop off the sick, and examine, in concert with General Duchemin, what could be done with the troops and the squadron. The commander intended to fight the English squadron a third time, and, if he emerged victorious from this new encounter, he wanted to attack Négapatam, whose possession, from two points of view military and maritime, would have been very useful to us.

1. This ship had circumnavigated the world with Cook. (Journal of the squadron major.)[404]

The squadron major went to Hyder-Ali to submit this proposal and request his assistance. Suffren's envoy found the nabob extremely irritated with General Duchemin. The Mysorean army had had several engagements with the English in which the expeditionary force had taken no part. After seizing the fortress of Permacoul, it would have, said the Sultan, gained very great advantages if it had been supported by our soldiers. However, Hyder-Ali showed the most favorable disposition toward the navy, and he promised to act by land when the time came. He instructed M. de Moissac to express to Suffren his desire to see him upon his return from this expedition. On June 25, the commander, having learned that the English were anchored off Négapatam, hastened preparations for departure. To fill the gaps in his crews, he embarked on the ships companies of sepoys and detachments borrowed from the troops of the Goudelour garrison. After taking seven hundred whites, Suffren wrote to the minister, there remain only six hundred healthy Europeans who will make up the Goudelour garrison. They will cover the hospitals and the depot until reinforcements arrive. If the war lasts, we must be sent strong frigates lined with copper. If, since I have been on the coast, I had had frigates, we would have done the English infinite harm. I only have two, and they have been used as much as possible. Circumstances have caused the King's intentions regarding the army to be carried out. If the announced reinforcements arrive and they are well commanded, all will be well. India is no longer the same country as it once was. The Carnatic and Arcate being absolutely devastated by war, one can only live there with the help of Hyder-Ali. He, with thousands of camels, brings food from the interior. In this respect, one will always be dependent on the nabob.[405]

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But to reduce it, money is needed; none is to be found in this country. The nabob shows me as much confidence as consideration, and I use all the confidence he appears to have in me to persuade him of the arrival of reinforcements, and that peace will not be made without understanding him, in order to prevent him from making his own. All his people want it; they are tired of waging war in a country where there is nothing left to take. The English, who see how critical their position is, are scattering money in the Durbar, so that he is the only one who wants war."

The prisoners, whose number was growing, were becoming a serious cause of embarrassment for the squadron. The weakness of the Goudelour garrison made it impossible to leave them in that city. Moreover, we had no ships available to send them to the Isle of France. Finally, the English authorities absolutely rejected any request for an exchange. In this situation, Suffren decided to hand them over to Hyder-Ali. A special agreement was made with the nabob to ensure that the prisoners were treated and fed in accordance with European customs. A French commissioner was tasked with ensuring the strict execution of the various clauses it contained.

When it was time to set sail for a third search for the English squadron, Suffren was able to write to the minister with justifiable pride: "Since my arrival in Ceylon, either through the help of the Dutch or through the captures I have made, the squadron has been able to survive for six months, and I have a guaranteed supply of wheat and rice for more than a year."[406]

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BOOK XIV

Battle of July 6, 1782. - Anchorage of the two squadrons on the coast. - The French return to Goudelour. - Incident concerning the captain of the *Sévère*. - M. de Cillart is dismissed from his command. - Captains de Maurville, the *Artésien*, de Forbin, and the *Vengeur* are sent back to France. - Suffren's interview with Hyder-Ali. - Departure of the squadron for Batacalo. - Arrival of the *Saint-Michel*, the *Illustre*, and the *Fortune*. - Capture of Trincomalee. - Battle of September 3, 1782. - The French return to Trincomalee. - Loss of the ship *Orient*. - The news of the capture of Trincomalee and the arrival of Admiral Hughes in Madras persuade Sir Eyre Coot to leave Goudelour. - The French are going to Achem, and the English to Bombay. - Suffren set sail on December 20 for the coast of Orixa.

I

The French squadron set sail on July 3 from the harbor of Goudelour. Two days later, our frigates reported the enemy anchored between Naour and Négapatam. The breeze blowing from the west allowed us to make for the English. As we approached, around 2:30 p.m., Admiral Hughes set sail. At 3:00 a white squall dismasted the *Ajax* of her main topmast and her topgallant mast. The *Héros* signaled that ship to take the rear of the line, and gave the frigate *Bellone* the order to observe her. The winds having shifted to the south-southwest, the French found themselves to leeward of the enemy.

1. At three o'clock, the ship *Ajax* lost its main topmast and topgallant mast in a squall or whirlwind which, although the line was tight, was felt only by it. (*Journal of the squadron major*.[407]

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Instead of attacking us, while the *Ajax* was incapacitated, the English admiral steered the wind out to sea. When the weather calmed down, the two squadrons anchored that evening. The frigate *Fine* was tasked with monitoring the enemy's movements, and the *Sylphide* joined the *Bellone* to rescue the *Ajax*. The commander gave Captain Bouvet the express recommendation to put himself in fighting condition as quickly as possible. At daybreak on July 6, the two squadrons set sail. The *Ajax* asked to remain at anchor, and was ordered to sail. Believing that Admiral Hughes was maneuvering to concentrate the bulk of his forces on our rearguard, Suffren ordered the *Orient*, a seventy-four-gun ship, to take up station at the tail of the line.[1] At ten o'clock in the morning, the two squadrons were running on port tack, with a light southwesterly breeze, the English to windward of the French. Although nearly twenty hours had passed since the *Ajax* had dismasted her main topmast and her topgallant mast, the ship's damage had not yet been repaired, and she was lying to leeward of the line.[2] As a result, we had the same number of ships as our adversaries.

1. "The two squadrons made a few manoeuvres during the morning. At seven-thirty, the squadron was ordered to tack to windward by the countermarch. The general hoped to pass within range of the enemy's rearguard, but the *Bizarre*, the lead ship, having failed to turn, delayed the evolution; the winds were then in the westerly part. At eight o'clock, the order was given to the division to close the line; at the same time, the lead ship turned. At a quarter to eight, the signal was given to the *Bizarre* to reduce sail and to the *Sphinx* to close the line. At half past eight, the *Bizarre*, which was in a slump, was ordered to serve. At three-quarters, the order was given to the *Bizarre* to hold the wind. This ship, having mistaken the signal to hold the wind for that of holding the wind on the port tack, turned downwind. The general gave it the order to take up station between the *Vengeur* and the *Orient*. (*Journal of the squadron major*.)

2. "The *Ajax* asked to put in, but the general refused. This ship having had neither its tillers nor its topmasts broken, it was quite extraordinary that it had not yet re-passed the topmasts." (*Journal of the squadron major*.)[408]

At ten-thirty, the English admiral launched a simultaneous attack on our fleet. Around eleven o'clock, with the enemy vanguard within cannon range, Suffren began firing. The battle began with great vivacity between the vanguard and the main body. In the rearguard, several English ships remained a long way to windward of our line. By three-quarters past twelve, some ships had already suffered heavily. The leader of the English army, the *Hero*, with seventy-four guns, withdrew from the battlefield. In our squadron, Suffren was forced to cover with his ship, the *Brillant*, which had lost its mainmast. At one o'clock, when the action was very heated, the wind suddenly shifted to the south-southeast. The new direction of the breeze, striking the English and French ships on the port side, threw both lines into disarray. With the exception of the *Sultan*, the *Eagle*, and the *Worcester*, which let the ships bear in time, the enemy ships were masked and fell to starboard. The English squadron found itself divided into two parts, one of which was pushed to the west and the other to the east. Admiral Hughes ordered his fleet to keep to the wind, tacks to port. Suffren gave the signal to tack luff for luff, all at once, and to form a line, without regard to the berths. Our evolution was intended to cover the *Brillant* and the *Sévère*, which had borne to starboard, and to cut off the *Eagle*, the *Worcester*, and the *Sultan*, if these three vessels did not maneuver quickly to rally their squadron. The *Worcester* and the *Eagle* directed a very lively fire against the *Brillant*, but the *Héros*, doubling this last vessel to windward, separated it from its two adversaries. The *Worcester*, after exchanging a few broadsides with the *Annibal*, passed alongside the *Héros*, receiving the whole broadside without reply, and moved away from the battlefield running broadside under full sail. The *Sévère*, of sixty-four, and the *Sultan*, of seventy-four, which the wind had placed very close to each other, cannonaded vigorously.[409]

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For a moment, on board the *Héros*, the *Sévère's* flag was no longer visible, but the emotion caused by this incident, attributed to the breaking of a flag halyard, was not long-lasting. The national colors reappeared astern of the French vessel, whose fire still seemed very sustained.[1] During this rapid engagement, the captain of the *Sultan* was tacking luff for luff, and as soon as he had completed his evolution, he headed towards his squadron. The *Eagle*, the only enemy vessel that remained within our range, was followed, at a short distance, by the *Vengeur* and the *Artésien*. If these two vessels managed to quickly unrig it, and, consequently, slow its progress, we had an even greater chance of capturing it, as several French ships, including the *Héros*, were maneuvering to cut it off. Already, some damage was noticeable in her masting when the *Artésien* arrived flat, following an explosion that occurred on the stern of her mizzenmast. This movement was all the less explainable, as it must have had the consequence of carrying the fire to the front of the ship. Suffren, very irritated with Captain de Maurville, immediately gave him, by signal, the order to hold the wind. The same injunction was given to the *Vengeur*, which ran broad-hauled and moved away from its adversary. The *Eagle*, taking advantage of the time we were losing, was soon out of range. At 3:50, the firing having ceased on both sides, Suffren rallied his ships and headed towards the enemy. The bulk of the English squadron, which was already far from us, was running in a westerly direction. Admiral Hughes had considered making an offensive return, but, faced with the situation of his fleet, he decided to retreat.

1. "The *Sévère* was then within range of an enemy seventy-four; her flag was lowered, which caused us some concern, but we soon saw her continue to fire on the ship and arrive in the line. Besides, we were close enough to rescue her in case of an accident." (*Journal of the Squadron Major*.)[410]

The *Hero* had distress signals atop her masts, and the *Worcester* was in full view[1] to leeward. The captain of the Monarca, passing near the *Superb*, had informed the admiral that he was unable to return to the line of fire. Finally, due to the damage they had sustained to their masts, most of the English vessels were maneuvering with great difficulty.[2] The English squadron approached the coast and, at 5:30, anchored between Négapatam and Nagore. The French ships dropped anchor about three leagues north of the enemy vessels. The next morning, Suffren headed for Goudelour. He was prepared to resume the battle interrupted the day before, but Admiral Hughes remained at anchor. On July 7, our vessels were joined by a brig flying the parliamentary flag. M. de Moissac, major of the squadron, went on board this ship, where he found Captain James Watt. This officer was the bearer of a letter in which his admiral claimed the *Sévère*, stating that the vessel had surrendered to the *Sultan*.[3] The commander had received no explanation from M. de Cillart that would have allowed him to understand the English admiral's approach. He only remembered that the *Sévère* had fought for a few moments without a flag. "The general," said the major of the squadron in his journal, to whom M. de Cillart had not yet reported, "replied to the admiral that, no doubt, a cut flag halyard could have led people to believe that the vessel had brought in; but that this had never been his intention, and that, moreover, he himself was, at that moment, close enough to rescue it, and even to recapture it, in the event that it had surrendered.[4]

1. The Worcester did not rallied its fleet until the next day, July 7.

2. Letter from Admiral Hughes to the Secretary of the English Admiralty.

3. In the English admiral's letter, the *Ajax* was mentioned; it was a mistake in name, the admiral meant the *Sévère*.

4. 4. Suffren reported to the minister, in the following terms, the complaints that had been addressed to him by the English admiral, concerning the ship the Sultan: “M. de Cillart, commanding the *Sévère*, having, in the affair of July 6, found himself very close to an enemy ship, lowered his flag, being very close to several ships of the squadron, notably the *Héros*. His officers urged him to have it re-hoisted and to continue the fight. I believed that the flag halyard had been cut, being far from suspecting such an infamy. On the 7th, Admiral Hughes sent a parliamentarian to claim it. As no account had been given to me, I replied, what I believed, that the flag halyard had been cut, and that if this vessel had surrendered, I was close enough to recapture it.”[411]

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Unpleasantly surprised that the commander-in-chief of the British squadron had based a claim of this magnitude on an accident as simple as the breaking of a flag halyard, he refused to receive Captain James Watt, who asked to pay his respects. At the moment the *Sévère's* flag disappeared, it was not that ship, as we have already noted, but its adversary that was compromised. Threatened with being cut off, the captain of the *Sultan* had no other concern than to complete his tack and rally his squadron. If this claim was ultimately worthless, the fact on which it was based was of the most scrupulous accuracy. The *Sévère's* flag had been lowered, on Captain de Cillart's orders, at the moment when that ship was alongside the *Sultan*. The officers, who rushed onto the deck, had made energetic representations to their commander, to which he had yielded. The flag had been re-hoisted, and the firing had resumed with renewed vigor.[1] These details were brought to Suffren's attention upon the squadron's arrival at Goudelour. M. de Cillart was immediately ordered to leave his command and embark, as a passenger, on a ship preparing to leave for Europe. The irritation the commander felt following this affair played a very large part in the action he took towards two other captains of the fleet.

1. The squadron major says in his journal that "*Sévère's* officers and his brave crew had refused to consent to the surrender of the ship and had continued to fire on the enemy."[412]

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Since the day the death of Count d'Orves placed him at the head of the India squadron, he was convinced that several of his captains lacked the ability or the energy necessary to support him. On February 17 and April 12, the results he was counting on had been compromised by the maneuvers of some of his ships. After these two battles came the one on July 6. On that day, the lack of activity of the captain of the *Ajax* had deprived us of the assistance of a sixty-four-gun ship. The commander was not inclined to be harsh with Mr. Bouvet, whose career was very honorable. But at that moment, this officer, doubly fatigued by age and illness, was unable to exercise command of his ship. If, on July 6, the captains of the *Vengeur* and the Artésien had put more energy and skill into the pursuit of the Eagle, this vessel, promptly *unrigged*, would have been joined by ours. No particular circumstance pleaded in the cause of these two officers. The *Vengeur*, which appeared in the combat of the Praya, had been, in this affair, of no help to its comrades in arms. He had behaved well on February 17, but, on April 12, being leader of the fleet, he had opened fire at a distance much too great, and, during the whole duration of the combat, he had been in front and far from his post. On that same day, the captain of the *Artésien* had followed all the movements of the *Vengeur*, and he was guilty of the same faults. Although the *Artésien* was copper-lined and had a good speed, M. de Maurville had been unable, on February 17, to take up a position that would allow him to fight. Finally, the commander remembered that this same officer had failed to capture the *San Carlos*, a ship loaded with provisions and equipment, while the French squadron was in complete destitution.[1]

1. On June 5, having been detached with two ships and a frigate to chase a ship and a corvette, at the onset of night, he reduced sail and moved away, to the point of not being seen by the frigates, who did not believe themselves strong enough to attack a ship of the line and a corvette. M. du Chilleau, seeing nothing more, at eleven o'clock in the evening, raised the chase, which he would not have done if the *Artésien* had remained between him and the frigates. The *Artésien's* rally caused the ship *San Carlos*, which was loaded with naval munitions and crew reinforcements, to miss the ship. (Letter from Suffren to the Minister.)[413]

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He decided to take, with regard to the captains of the *Vengeur* and the *Artésien*, a measure from which he had balked on February 17, although he already considered it necessary. M. de Forbin bore an illustrious name in the navy, and he was, by marriage, related to Suffren. M. de Maurville, son of a lieutenant general, had five brothers in the navy. These considerations were powerless to modify a resolution that he considered indispensable to the good of the State. The captains of the *Vengeur* and the *Artésien* were removed from their command and sent to France at the disposal of the minister. As for the captain of the *Ajax*, he left his ship due to the poor state of his health.[1] At the time when Suffren displayed this vigor in the exercise of his command, he was only a ship's captain. However, at that time, as the following passage from a letter he wrote to the minister testifies, the regulations did not allow general officers to act as he had done. "You may be angry, Monseigneur, that I did not take action sooner, but I beg you to consider that the ordinance does not even give this right to general officers and that I am not one." Suffren was, in fact, a squadron leader, but he did not know his promotion.

We indicate below the figures for the dead and wounded on the ships of the two squadrons, as well as the order in which they had fought.

1. "I gladly granted him," Suffren wrote to the minister, referring to the captain of the *Ajax*, "the permission he requested from me to go to Europe for health reasons. This officer, who was really very ill, died on October 6, 1782, in Trincomalee. A pension of eight hundred pounds, from the royal treasury, was granted, from the same day, to his widow.[414]

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ESCADRE FRANÇAISE.

Ligne de bataille. — Ordre renversé.

Noms des bâtiments.	Nombre de canons.	Noms des capitaines.	Tués.	Blessés.
Troisième escadre.				
Flamand	50	De Cuverville	13	56
Annibal	74	De Tromelin	28	80
Sévère	64	De Cillart	20	77
Brillant	64	De Saint-Félix	47	136
Corps de bataille.				
Héros	74	Suffren De Moissac	25	72
Sphinx	64	Du Chilleau	19	85
Hannibal	50	Galle	5	13
Artésien	64	Maurville	12	38
Deuxième escadre.				
Vengeur	64	Forbin	8	44
Bizarre	64	La Landelle	»	»
Orient	74	La Pallière	1	»
Totaux des tués et des blessés			178	601

ESCADRE ANGLAISE.

Ligne de bataille.

Noms des bâtiments.	Nombre de canons.	Noms des capitaines.	Tués.	Blessés.
Division rouge.				
Hero	74	Hughes King, commodore	12	23
Exeter	64	Robert Montagu	11	24
Isis	50	Lumley	9	19
Burford	70	Peter Rainier	7	34
Division bleue.				
Sultan	74	James Watt	16	21
Superb	74	Mac Lellan Sir E. Hughes, vice-amir.	7	19
Monarca	68	John Gell	8	46
Worcester	64	Wood	1	9
Division blanche.				
Montmouth	64	James Alms	»	12
Eagle	64	Ambrose Reddals	4	9
Magnanime	64	Charles Wolseley	2	7
			77	223

Totals killed and wounded[1]

1. Captain Lumley of the *Isis* was among the dead.

The English, having fought to windward, were very out of gear, while the French, positioned to leeward, had a large number of men disabled. The losses, aboard some ships belonging to the two rearguards, were very low. The position taken by several vessels of the English fleet explains this result. On February 17 and April 12, we were to windward, and consequently free to close in on our adversaries. On July 6, the roles were reversed, and the English were masters of the distance at which they wished to fight. Admiral Hughes, whose maneuver was imitated by most of his captains, positioned himself very close to us. Some ships of the rearguard did not follow this example. They luffed too early, and they remained, throughout the duration of the fight, far from the ships corresponding to them in our line. "The *Orient* and the *Bizarre*," wrote Suffren, "took no part in the battle, the English rearguard having always remained distant." The officers commanding the tail-end ships of the English line had not shown themselves to be more skillful maneuverers on July 6 than the captains of the *Vengeur* and the *Artésien* had been on April 12. Although nothing emerges from this comparison that could mitigate the conduct of Messrs. de Forbin and Maurville, it is necessary to note these facts in order to restore the true nature of the faults committed by our officers.

The squadron had arrived at Goudelour with needs that its resources did not allow it to meet. Our destitution was such that Suffren was obliged to dismast the frigates to remast the ships and to take the masts of the corvettes to give them to the frigates. The squadron major reports, as follows, in his journal, the arrangements made to overcome obstacles which would have seemed insurmountable to anyone other than Suffren. "We are very hard pressed to have topmasts, having lost many in the three battles.[415]

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The general has ordered that the mainmast of the *Pourvoyeuse*, with its topmasts, yards, and sails, will be given to the *Brillant*. The *Fortitude* will give its mainmast to the *Pourvoyeuse*, and its mizzenmast for a ship's topmast. The *Sylphide* will give its mainmast, which can be used as a topmast, and will replace it with a makeshift mast. The *Pulvériseur* will give its two lower masts, which can be used as topmasts, and will be re-masted with those of the prize *Yarmouth*. The general's intention is to send the *Pourvoyeuse* to Malac, where it will make a mainmast and load masts that the English are having cut in the strait. The *Fortitude* will go to Pegu; there, it will make a mainmast and load timbers of all sizes. The French squadron was to carry out these various operations in a harbor where the sea was very rough when the breeze blew from the open sea. The enemy's position, remaining to windward of Goudelour, added to the difficulties of this situation. Nevertheless, the work was immediately undertaken, and the order was given to proceed, day and night, with all the activity that the circumstances required.

II

A few days after his arrival in the harbor of Goudelour, Suffren received news of the arrival at the Isle of France of the ships *Saint-Michel*, sixty, the *Illustre*, seventy-four, and several transports. Lieutenant General de Bussy, appointed to command the land and sea forces beyond the Cape of Good Hope, was on board one of the vessels.[1]

1. The Saint-Michel, the *Illustre*, the cutter *Le Lézard*, which left Cadiz on January 4, 1782, had anchored on January 11 at Tenerife, the rendezvous assigned to the transports which had left Brest on December 12, 1781, at the same time as the squadron of Lieutenant General de Guichen. Almost all of the vessels captured in Admiral Kempenfeldt's daring raid belonged to the convoy which was going to India. Only three transports had arrived at Tenerife. M. de Bussy, whose name would have betrayed France's designs on India, had gone to Cadiz incognito.[416]

The frigate *Bellone*, on a mission to Tranquebar, brought to Goudelour M. de Launay, who commanded the artillery of the expeditionary force. This officer had come from the Isle of France to Pointe de Galles on the cutter *Lézard*. From the island of Ceylon, he had passed along the Coromandel coast and reached Tranquebar by land. The *illustre, Saint-Michel*, the frigate *Consolante*, and several ships carrying provisions, naval munitions, and 600 soldiers were to set sail a few days after the departure of *Lézard*. M. de Launay brought the dispatches that the minister addressed to the commander and General Duchemin. Marshal de Castries announced that two new convoys, carrying 5,000 men, would leave our ports at the beginning of 1782.

It had been agreed that Suffren would have an interview with Hyder-Ali upon his return. This prince, wishing to give the great man who commanded our squadron a shining mark of his esteem, came with his entire army, about one hundred thousand strong, to establish himself a few leagues from our anchorage. Two of his principal officers and a large cavalry escort went to Goudelour to accompany the commander to his camp. The latter was received, upon his arrival, by the entire Mysorean army under arms. The political and military situation of the Sultan had suffered a new blow. This prince had learned that his former allies were about to become his enemies. The provinces of his empire, which bordered the Malabar coast, left defenseless by the defection of the Mahrattas, were attacked by the troops of the Presidency of Bombay. He could not count on the French corps which was barely sufficient to guard Goudelour.[417]

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As a result, the Mysorean army found itself alone in the presence of all the forces Great Britain had in India. Finally, he was informed that the English were expecting a convoy bringing considerable reinforcements very soon.[1] This situation forced him to either make peace or withdraw from the Carnatic to defend his own states. Suffren set about combating the nabob's discouragement. The dispatches from Marshal de Castries, brought by M. de Launay, gave assurance that five thousand soldiers would soon land at the Isle of France. The appointment of Lieutenant-General de Bussy to command the troops indicated, on the part of the French government, the firm intention of taking a very active part in Indian affairs. Yielding to Suffren's entreaties, the nabob, to whom the thought of dealing with the English was extremely painful, promised to send his son Tippo-Saïb to the Malabar coast and to remain, in person, in the Carnatic with the greater part of his forces. Before leaving the camp, Suffren succeeded in bringing about a rapprochement between the nabob and General Duchemin. Judging by the following passage from one of his letters, the commander disapproved of the line of conduct followed by the French general. "This prince," he said to the minister, speaking of Hyder-Ali, "has placed the greatest confidence in me; he treats me as a brother and asks me for advice. I can affirm that if we had known how to take this prince, we would have done whatever we wanted with him. I had no other cunning with him than to have none and to always speak the truth." After a second interview with Hyder-Ali, Suffren hastened the preparations for departure. He wanted to rejoin the ships that had left the Isle of France as quickly as possible, shortly after the *Lézard*. The obligation to sail for Batacalo, as well as the proximity of the English squadron that had withdrawn to Madras, prevented him from attacking Negapatam.

1. That of Rear Admiral Bickerton, who left England on February 6, 1782.[418]

He then wanted to prepare to take Trincomalee, in case Admiral Hughes, misled about his movements, remained in the north. The squadron left Goudelour on August 1st with 600 infantrymen and a company of gunners. An engineering officer, Mr. Des Roys, in whom the commander had great confidence, took passage aboard the *Héros*.

The French officers, sent to Tranquebar to supply the squadron, encountered great difficulty in accomplishing their mission. The Danish authorities had shown, on several occasions, extreme partiality for the English. The nabob, who had particular cause for complaint, wanted to seize the city. Tranquebar was useful to us for selling our prizes and purchasing supplies. Suffren arrested the Sultan, but warned the governor that if he did not change his conduct, he should expect severe reprisals from the Mysorean army and the French squadron.[1] On August 8, the commander communicated with a boat sent to meet him by the captain of the *Saint-Michel*. The officer in command announced that all the ships in the convoy had arrived at Pointe de Galles. The next day, the squadron, with the exception of the cutter *Lézard*, left for observation off Trincomalee, anchored in Batacalo Bay. The frigate *La Bellone*, cruising along the coast, joined the army on August 12. The day before, it had had an engagement with an enemy frigate.

1. Suffren wrote to the governor of Tranquebar: "I must warn you that if this prince (Hyder-Ali), rightly irritated by your actions, decided to make war on you, and if he ordered me to rush to your ships, I could not refrain from doing so. You feel, sir, that you alone would be responsible to your court, your nation and Europe itself for the evils which would result from the action to which you would have forced me."[419]

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The captain of the *Bellone*, Lieutenant de Pierrevert, Suffren's nephew, had been killed early in the action. Although the English frigate was inferior in strength to ours, it had managed to escape after an hour of fighting.[1] On August 21, the *Illustre*, the *Saint-Michel*, the corvette *Fortune*, and seven transports carrying supplies, ammunition, and 600 infantrymen rallied to the commander-in-chief's flag. Forty-eight hours later, all operations relating to the distribution and transshipment of supplies and equipment were completed, and the squadron put back to sea. Having learned on the 24th from the captain of the *Lézard* that the English had not appeared, Suffren headed for Trincomalee. Arriving on the 25th at the entrance, the squadron entered the outer bay, and, tacking with a nice southwest breeze, reached the back bay, where it dropped anchor out of cannon range of the place. A few broadsides, fired by the batteries near which our ships had passed, had caused minor damage to the *Hannibal*, the *Sphinx*, and the *Saint-Michel*. Two thousand three hundred men, including five hundred marines and six hundred sepoys, were put ashore during the night of July 26th to 27th. On the 27th and 28th, the French erected batteries that were armed with guns taken from our ships. The forts of Trincomalee and Ostienbourg, without communication between them, defended the city.

1. The squadron major relates this event as follows: "The *Bellone* entered the harbor: an officer came to report to the general that, the day before, the frigate had fought against another vessel; that a superiority of musketry and a lot of grapeshot thrown by howitzers had unrigged the *Bellone*, from the beginning of the combat, and made it lose the advantage that the number and strength of its guns should have given it. M. de Pierrevert, commanding the frigate, nephew of M. de Suffren, had been killed at the beginning of the affair. M. Boucher, auxiliary officer, who had the command after, had been killed; M. Stephano, Neapolitan officer, seriously wounded. The English frigate had moved away after an hour of combat, and had left the *Bellone* unable to pursue it. The latter had forty men out of action."[420]

Our fire, opened on the morning of the 29th, very quickly acquired a marked superiority over that of the enemy. On July 30, the commander of the fort of Trincomalee, Captain Macdowal, ordered to surrender, sent an officer to the French camp to negotiate a capitulation. Some difficulties having arisen between the negotiators, Suffren resolved them in favor of the enemy. Convinced that the arrival of Admiral Hughes was imminent, he did not want to delay, by unnecessary demands, the moment when a position of this importance would be placed in his hands. The garrison, composed of 150 white soldiers and 300 sepoys, left the city with the honors of war. It was to be transported to Madras at the expense of our government. The commander of the Ostienbourg fort surrendered on July 31, on the same terms. He had under his command the same number of men as Captain Macdowal. This success, which gave the French squadron the only existing port on the coast, had cost us only twenty-five men killed or wounded. The general immediately took all the measures required for the prompt organization of his new conquest. The troops intended to garrison the place were designated, and our ships received the order to re-embark the personnel and equipment they had put ashore.

On the afternoon of September 2, our lookouts reported the English squadron. The French hastened their preparations for departure and set sail the next day at daybreak.[1] The English, who had approached the coast, were keeping to the wind, tack to starboard, with a fresh southwest breeze, heading for the entrance to Trincomalee. At the sight of the French flag flying over all the forts, Admiral Hughes let it arrive in a successive movement, and he steered four quarters broadside, under small sails.

1. The Héros and the *Annibal* collided. The former of these vessels sustained some damage.[421]

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His intention was to accept combat only late in the day. If he were defeated, night would cover his retreat; if the fortunes of arms were favorable to him, our disabled ships would be far from the port we had conquered. Suffren very much desired to have another opportunity to confront the enemy. The squadron, positioned on a bearing line, covered itself with canvas to reach the English who were ahead of us and to leeward of us. Admiral Hughes had five ships of seventy-four, six of sixty-four, and one of fifty, making twelve ships. We had fourteen ships, including three of seventy-four, seven of sixty-four, one of sixty, and three of fifty. In order to take advantage of this superiority, which was more apparent than real, if we only consider the number of cannons, Suffren ordered the captains of the *Vengeur* and the *Consolante* to double the last ships of the English line from downwind, as soon as the action was engaged. The strength of the breeze, the unevenness of the course of our ships, the speed of the broad reach were all obstacles to the regularity of our line. Most of our ships, and especially those of the vanguard, were not at their posts. Some attempts made by the commander to restore order remained without result. Whether Suffren allowed himself to be carried away by the desire to join the enemy, or whether he assumed that each captain would know, once the first shots had been fired, to take up position abeam of an English ship, he continued his route. At two thirty, after having covered about twenty-five miles, we were at a short distance from the enemy. At this moment, the *Héros* fired a cannon shot to the signal to let the ship arrive, which was hoisted at the top of her masts. Due to a most regrettable error, this cannon shot was followed by the *Hero's* broadside. The captains, convinced that the commander-in-chief intended to commence combat, followed this example.[422]

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Recognizing the impossibility of ceasing the fire, Suffren signaled to fight within pistol range, thus summarizing the objective each ship was to aim for. The English were running broadside, under small sails, while the French fleet arrived at them, dependent. Our ships, having the wind on the starboard quarter, were obliged, in order to comply with the commander-in-chief's order, to reduce sail and calculate their turn so as to position themselves, with the appropriate sails, abeam of the ships corresponding to them in the enemy line. The smoke covering the battlefield added to the difficulties of this maneuver. When each ship had completed its evolution, our line was in the greatest disorder. Almost all of our ships had retained too much area, at the same time as they had over-reached. As a result, they found themselves ahead and to windward of the position they should have occupied. The entire vanguard and the first two ships of the main body formed a compact group in front of the first enemy ships. The *Illustre*, commanded by M. de Bruyères, the rear sailor of the *Héros*, was the only ship to take up its position. The *Flamand* and the rearguard ships were to windward and abeam of the *Héros* and the *Illustre*. These ships were confused and hindered each other, both in maneuvering and in fighting. The vanguard and the first two ships of the main body, seven ships out of fourteen, became almost useless. The fire of these ships only fell on the *Exeter*, the leader of the English fleet, and on the *Isis* which followed it. The *Flamand*, the *Annibal* and the *Bizarre* fired from afar and did little harm to the enemy. The captain of the *Ajax*, Lieutenant de Beaumont, more fortunate or more skillful than his comrades, managed to free himself from the ships surrounding him, and he came to position himself on the bow of the *Héros*.[423]

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The *Vengeur* and the *Consolante*, complying with the commander-in-chief's orders, had let the last ship of the English squadron bear down to leeward, but the captains of these two vessels, seeing that they were unsupported, did not want to expose themselves to the danger of being cut off, and they remained to windward of the enemy. Shortly after, fire broke out in the *Vengeur's* mizzen top, and the vessel moved away from the battlefield. In reality, three vessels, the *Héros*, the *Illustre*, and the *Ajax*, bore the brunt of the battle. Suffren multiplied signals to rally the scattered vessels, but the breeze, very fresh at the beginning of the action, suddenly died down, and the ships of the two squadrons remained motionless where they were. Time was running out, and our three ships, beaten across by the ships of the center of the English fleet, enfiladed by those placed at the ends of the line, were suffering greatly. At four thirty, the *Héros* had her sails in tatters, all her maneuvers cut off, and she could no longer steer. The *Illustre* had lost her main topmast and her mizzenmast. Around five thirty, a light south-southwest breeze having arisen, the English tacked luff for luff all at once. "If the enemy had veered the wind ahead," said the squadron major in his journal, "we would have been cut off and probably destroyed." After executing this movement, our adversaries continued the fight by cannonading us from the port side. The breeze was favorable for bringing our ships back to the battlefield, but it was very light, and they arrived only very slowly. Meanwhile, the *Héros*, the *Illustre*, and the *Ajax* continued to fight with the same vigor. [1] At six o'clock, the *Héros's* mainmast, riddled with missiles, fell into the sea. At six-quarters past six, the English, who were running opposite, began to pull away.

1. Our crew, despairing at the poor maneuvering of our ships, was not discouraged, however, and we responded with the same vivacity to the enemy fire we were then receiving, on the opposite side, distributed among the *Ajax*, the *Illustre*, and ourselves. (*Journal of the squadron major*.)[424]

At the same time, several vessels, led by the *Artésien*, captained by Saint-Félix, passed between the *Héros* and the enemy.[1] The English let them arrive and steered northwest while the bulk of the French fleet held their starboard tacks to the wind. Suffren left the *Héros*, as he had already been obliged to do on the evening of April 12, and crossed to the *Orient*. As soon as our vessels had reached the flag of the commander-in-chief, the *Héros* and the *Illustre* were taken in tow, and the squadron headed for the coast of Ceylon. On the night of September 6-7, around four o'clock in the morning, the squadron, tacking without orders, in a strong land breeze, the *Orient*, one of the three seventy-fours of the fleet, attacked Pointe Sale, at the entrance to Trincomalee.[2] All efforts to raise it from the coast were in vain. The ship was old, tired, and broke very quickly. The squadron, which had anchored near the *Orient* to salvage equipment, entered Trincomalee on September 17. Several enemy ships, notably the *Eagle*, the *Burford*, the *Montmouth*, and the *Superb*, had been badly damaged in the battle of September 3.[3] Admiral Hughes, having no more ports on the coast, had headed for Madras, where he anchored on September 9.

We indicate below the order in which the two squadrons were arrayed at the start of the action, and the losses they had suffered. The table relating to our fleet also includes a note from Suffren on the conduct of each captain.

1. M. de Saint-Félix had left the *Flamand*, of fifty, to take the *Artésien*, of sixty-four, after the departure of M. de Maurville.

2. Suffren was no longer on board the *Orient*.

3. Report from Admiral Hughes.[425]

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ESCADRE FRANÇAISE

Ligne de bataille.

Noms des bâtiments.	Nombre de canons.	Noms des capitaines[1].	Tués.	Blessés.	Observations.
		Avant-garde.			
L'Artésien.....	64	De Saint-Félix...	4	12	Très-bien dans les premiers, mal dans celui-ci.
L'Orient.....	74	De la Pallière....	»	»	Bien dans le commencement de l'action.
Saint-Michel.	60	D'Aymar	2	»	Mal.
Sévère.	64	De Langle.....	»	»	Très-mal.
Brillant	64	De Kersauson....	5	8	Moins mal.
		Corps de bataille.			
Hannibal (angl.).	50	De Galle	»	»	Très-mal.
Sphinx.	64	Du Chilleau	»	»	Très-mal.
Héros.....	74	Suffren ..... / De Moissac	30	72	»
Illustrious	74	De Bruyères.....	24	82	Very good, one couldn't do better.
Flamand	50	De Salvert.....	1	13	Very bad.
		Arrière-garde.			
Ajax.....	64	De Beaumont	10	24	Très-bien.
Consolante	36	Péan.....	3	8	Capitaine tué.
Annibal.....	74	De Tromelin.....	»	»	On ne peut plus mal, il n'a jamais été à portée de canon.
Vengeur	64	De Cuverville....	1	26	Un accident de feu l'a empêché de bien A fire accident prevented him from doing well.
Bizarre	64	De la Landelle..2		16	Poorly in all four battles, without anything significant enough to dismiss him.
Totals killed and wounded[2]			82	255	

1. Messrs. de Langle, de Kersauson, de Salvert, de Beaumont, and Péan were lieutenants.

2. Officers killed: Messrs. de Péan, de Voutron, lieutenants; de la Grandière, ensign; Dubousquet, frigate lieutenant. Officers wounded: Messrs. de Bruyères, ship lieutenant; d'Ankarlo, de Cardignan, de Beaupoil, ensigns; Amielh, Dulac, frigate lieutenants; Delatour-Godis, Séguier, infantry officers.[426]

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ESCADRE ANGLAISE.

Ligne de bataille.

Noms des bâtiments.	Nombre de canons.	Noms des capitaines.	Tués.	Blessés.
Division rouge.				
Exeter	64	King	6	18
Isis	50	Lumley	5	19
Hero	74	Hawker	1	17
Sceptre	64	Graves	2	13
Division bleue.				
Burford	70	Rainier	4	32
Sultan	74	James Watt	4	43
Superb	74	Sir Edward Hughes, vice-amiral / Henry Newcome	4	29
Monarca	68	Gell	4	40
Division blanche.				
Eagle	64	Reddall	8	14
Magnanime	64	Wolseley	4	16
Montmouth	64	Alms	»	3
Worcester	64	Charles Wood	4	15
		Total killed and wounded:[1]	46	259 .....

1. Captains Lumley of the Isis and James Watt of the *Sultan* were among the dead. Captain Charles Wood of the *Worcester*, seriously wounded during the action, died of his wounds[427]

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Suffren had conceived the very legitimate hope, due to the superiority of his forces, of defeating the English fleet. The relative failure of that day caused him deep irritation. Until then, he had only complained about a few of his captains; after the battle of September 3, he accused almost his entire fleet of having abandoned him. It was under the influence of this feeling that he wrote to the minister: "My heart is broken by the most general defection. I have just missed the opportunity to destroy the English squadron. I had fourteen ships and the *Consolante*, which I had put in line. Admiral Hughes avoided without fleeing, or rather, he fled in order, conforming his sails to the course of the worst sailing ships. Casting off as he went, he made the wind run up to ten and even twelve times. It was not until two o'clock in the afternoon that I was able to reach him. My line almost formed, I attacked and gave the signal to approach. I had signaled the *Vengeur* and the *Consolante* to double by the rear, but they did not approach. Only the *Héros*, the *Illustre* and the *Ajax* fought close and in line. The others, without regard for their positions, without making any maneuvers, fired from afar or, better to say, out of cannon range. All, yes all, were able to approach since we were to windward and ahead, and none did. Several of these behaved bravely in other battles. I can only attribute this horror to the desire to finish the campaign, to ill will and to ignorance, for I would not dare suspect anything worse. The result was terrible. The *Héros*, the *Illustrious* have lost their mainmast, mizzenmast, foremast, etc. These would be terrible losses in Europe, judge in India where we have no resources of this kind. I must tell you, Monseigneur, that officers who have been at the Isle of France for a long time are neither sailors nor soldiers. Not sailors, because they have not sailed there, and the mercantile spirit of independence and insubordination is absolutely opposed to the military spirit.[428]

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The masters there have acquired a spirit of plunder, which is impossible to repress. You cannot imagine, Monseigneur, all the little tricks they employed to make me return. You will not be surprised if you know that on the Isle of France, money is worth eighteen percent, and, when you do business, infinitely more, and for that, you have to be there. Messrs. de la Landelle, de Tromelin, de Saint-Félix, and de Galle have asked to leave their ships; I was too displeased with them not to grant it with pleasure. If I do not change several others, it is due to a lack of people capable of commanding the ships; I am sending you the apostilled list. It is dreadful to have been able to destroy the English squadron four times, and for it to still exist. The choice of officers for India is most essential because we are not in a position to change them. I do not believe I have the necessary talents; I am only reassured by the confidence you have in me. But, in truth, if my death or my health caused the command to be vacant, who would replace me? M. d'Aymar? You know him. M. Peynier is brave, zealous, excellent for a day of combat, but I would believe the leadership of a large squadron to be far beyond his strength at this time, having not yet been tested in this part. I know only one person who has all the qualities one could desire; who is very brave, very educated, full of ardor and zeal, disinterested, a good sailor: it is M. d'Albert de Rions, and even if he were in America, send him a frigate. I would be better off having him, for he will help me; and if I die, you will be assured that the good of the service will lose nothing. If you had given it to me when I asked, we would be masters of India. I may have made mistakes; in war, which does not make them, but I cannot be blamed for any of those that cause loss of business."

Of the fourteen ships that made up the French fleet, the *Vengeur*, the Illustre, the *Ajax*, and the *Héros* were the only ones that were exonerated.[429]

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The *Bizarre*, the *Annibal*, the *Flamand*, the *Artésien*, the *Orient*, the *Saint-Michel*, the *Sévère*, the *Brillant*, the *Hannibal*, and the *Sphinx*, ten vessels, were reported as having taken no part in the combat. The captain of the *Bizarre*, M. de la Landelle, had, in all circumstances, conducted himself very mediocrely. M. de Tromelin, after playing an absolutely insignificant role on February 17, had held his post satisfactorily on April 12, and had distinguished himself on July 6. The *Artésien*, the *Orient*, the *Saint-Michel*, the *Sévère*, the *Brillant*, the *Annibal*, and the *Sphinx* belonged to the group that had separated from the center of our army at the start of the action. Made immobile by the calm, brought back to the battlefield by the south-east breeze, at the moment when the enemy was moving away, these vessels had achieved no other result than to force the *Exeter* to leave the line. These vessels were commanded by Messrs. d'Aymar, de Saint-Félix, de la Pallière, Kersauson, de Langle, de Galle and du Chilleau. Captain d'Aymar, who had recently arrived in India, was a very honourably known officer. He had been cited by Lieutenant General de Guichen as having particularly distinguished himself in one of the battles fought in the Antilles against Admiral Rodney. Messrs. de Saint-Félix, de la Pallière, du Chilleau and de Galle were present at the battles of 17 February, 12 April and 6 July. We have seen from Suffren's correspondence the esteem in which he held these captains and the value he placed on their bravery. The departure of Messrs. de Forbin, de Maurville, Bouvet and de Cillart had left the commands of four ships vacant. Suffren had given them to lieutenants whose distinguished service had made them suitable for this position. It could not be admitted that these officers had not brought the utmost goodwill to the exercise of their new functions. What was true was that Messrs. de Kersauson and de Langle, the captains of the *Artésien* and the *Sévère*, as well as Mr. de Salvert who commanded the Flamand, had not been able to free themselves from the ships in the midst of which they were, and take up a combat position, as had done their colleague, Lieutenant de Beaumont, captain of the *Ajax*.[430]

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In summary, among the number of officers who did not fight were men like Messrs. d'Aymar, de Saint-Félix, de Galle, and de la Pallière. This alone is enough to show that the cause of the inaction of almost the entirety of our fleet should not be sought in accusations of defection and cowardice. We take the liberty of expressing regret that such unfortunate and, we do not hesitate to say, unjust expressions should have been found in Suffren's pen.

On September 3, the commander of the French squadron, impatient to fight, arrived within cannon range of the enemy with an fleet that had not yet managed to form up. He went into action with an impetuosity that was all the more difficult to explain since he himself complained about the lack of ability of most of his captains. Now, that day, he asked them what an admiral is entitled to expect from even the most skilled officers commanding excellent ships. Fortune, which plays its part in all things, when it is not played by others, declared itself against us. First, it was the extremely fresh breeze that hampered the maneuvering of our ships, then the calm that, having surprised them outside their positions, kept them where they were. Such was certainly, judging by his conduct, as we shall see later, Suffren's view of the battle of September 3, when time had softened the regrets that the failure of that day had made him feel. Messrs. de Tromelin, de la Landelle, de Galle, and de Saint-Félix, who had asked to leave their ships, left on September 24 for the Isle of France.[1]

1. The departure of Messrs. de Tromelin, de la Landelle, de Galle and de Saint-Félix is mentioned as follows in the Journal of the Major of the Squadron: "Mr. de Tromelin has asked to leave his ship to attend to his business in the Ile de France, and return to Europe. Messrs. de Saint-Félix, de la Landelle and de Galle, very inconvenienced, have asked to leave their ships to go to the Ile de France to restore their health."[431]

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It is said that the flag halyards of the *Héros* having been cut during the battle of September 3, Suffren, transported with indignation at the thought that his ship might be thought to have been brought under, cried out: "White flags, let them cover my ship with flags." We have found no trace of this incident, either in Suffren's correspondence or in the journal of the squadron's major. This is why we have refrained from reporting it. We believe we have done no harm to Suffren's memory. His heroic conduct, which we have faithfully recounted, remains above the most eloquent words.

Suffren learned, during his stay in Trincomalee, that the Order of Malta had conferred on him the title of bailiff.

III

A few days after our arrival in Trincomalee, news of the death of General Duchemin was received. His successor, Colonel d'Hoffelize, wrote that the French corps, weakened by disease, was unable to hold the campaign. He attributed to General Sir Eyre Coot, who had considerable forces at his disposal, the intention of besieging it in Goudelour. The country was so devastated that the nabob, held back by the lack of food and fodder, could only come to its aid with difficulty. The English, momentarily masters of the sea, drew their supplies from Madras. This news was all the more worrying since the squadron was unable to leave Trincomalee before being repaired. Suffren once again resorted to the means he had employed after the battle of July 6. The *Bizarre* gave its mainmast to the ship the *Illustre*, and he took that of one of the frigates.[432]

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The *Héros* made a mainmast from the section of its own and the foremast of the *Orient*. The foremast and mizzenmasts of the *Illustre* and the *Héros*, which were riddled with cannonballs, were reinforced with heavy-duty spars. Despite the resources that the unfortunate loss of the *Orient* placed at his disposal, Suffren disarmed the forty-gun frigate the *Consolante*. The equipment and personnel of this frigate were necessary to make the ships seaworthy. The work was carried out with great activity, and the squadron set sail for Goudelour. The next day, a large English transport, chased by our frigates and on the verge of being captured, ran aground under full sail near Négapatam. The officer sent aboard this vessel, believing that it would not be possible to refloat it, set it on fire. This determination deprived the squadron and the garrison of Goudelour of very precious resources. This ship was loaded with provisions and war material.[1] Arriving in the harbor of Goudelour, on October 4, 1782, the commander's steadfastness of mind was subjected to a new test. The *Bizarre*, occupying the last rank in the line, had to take its anchorage after all the ships of the squadron. The captain, wanting to place himself ashore from the ships that already had their anchors on the bottom, approached too close to the coast and his ship struck. He immediately received the assistance his position required, but all efforts made to refloat the Bizarre were useless. This ship, which was old and tired, punctured a few hours after its grounding. It was learned that the English admiral, in defiance of international law, had sent the *Sultan* to Tranquebar, with the order to seize the French and Dutch ships anchored in the harbor.

1. The general would have liked it to have been preserved, especially since, having only grounded on the mud, it could have been easily removed; everyone had escaped to land. This vessel, which belonged to the East India Company, carried twenty-four cannons and was lined with copper. (*Journal of the squadron major.*)[433]

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The cutter *Le Lézard*, which was fortunately the only ship we had off this fortress, had been captured. The French corps was in a better position than one might have thought, according to the dispatches of Colonel d'Hoffelize. Upon learning of Admiral Hughes's return to Madras, Sir Eyre Coot, convinced that Suffren would soon appear, had withdrawn from Goudelour. Thus, the battle of September 2, despite its incomplete results, had freed our troops.

Admiral Bickerton had left England on February 6, 1782, with six ships and a convoy to go to India. One of these ships, the *Sceptre*, which had become separated from its squadron during heavy weather, had anchored at Madras at the beginning of October. The arrival of Admiral Bickerton was to bring to seventeen the number of vessels under the command of Admiral Hughes. Since the loss of the *Orient* and the *Bizarre*, we could only oppose such considerable forces with twelve vessels. The *Argonaute* and the *Fendant*, of sixty, the *Alexandre* and the *Hardi* armed en flûte, and several transport ships had left France on February 12, 1782, to join the Comte d'Orves. These vessels had moved extremely slowly, due to the poor condition of the *Alexandre*. This vessel, which was taking on a lot of water, had been in danger of sinking several times. Shortly before arriving at the Cape of Good Hope, an epidemic had broken out on board the vessels of this division. The officer in command, Captain de Peynier, had sent a notice to the Isle of France to inform M. de Bussy that he would probably be forced to extend his stay at False Bay well beyond the time necessary to take on water and fresh provisions. The general impatiently awaited the reinforcements that the minister had announced. He had already warned Suffren that he would set sail in August for the Coromandel Coast, where he assumed that a second convoy, leaving Brest on April 21, 1782, would join him very promptly.[434]

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Now, at the same time as he received Mr. de Peynier's letters, he learned of the capture of the *Pegasus* and the dispersal of the transports that this vessel had under its escort.[1] Convinced that neither men nor ships would arrive in time to join the bailiff before the wintering season, he wrote to him that he would go to Achem as soon as Peynier's division reached the Isle of France. By proceeding to the point indicated by the general, Suffren would no longer be covering the important possession of Trincomalee with his squadron. Moreover, if Admiral Hughes, who had no port of refuge on the coast, decided to spend the wintering season at Achem, Commander Peynier's division and his convoy would have been compromised. It was doubtful that by remaining in Trincomalee the squadron would find the resources necessary to subsist, while at Achem it was certain of having provisions. There, the squadron would be, upon the return of the fine weather, to windward of the Coromandel coast, and, consequently, in a position to move to any point that M. de Bussy would judge suitable. The garrison of Trincomalee consisted of 650 soldiers from the Isle of France, 155 Dutch chasseurs, 100 land and sea artillerymen, 600 sepoys and 600 Malays, that is 2,100 men with provisions and munitions of war. The governor, M. Des Roys, believed himself to be in complete safety with the forces at his disposal. After weighing these various considerations, Suffren decided to go to Achem, and he set sail for this destination on 15 October. In a private letter, Suffren wrote upon leaving Goudelour:

1. This was the second convoy announced by the minister in a letter that Suffren had received in the harbor of Goudelour, after the battle of July 6.[435]

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"The major items necessary for the success of the expedition are generals and money; these two items cannot be overemphasized, especially the first. We would need to get masts, seafaring men, and many strong frigates across; for 150 leagues of coastline where we can establish cruises, and five straits to guard, I have, in all, two copper-lined frigates, the *Fine* and the *Bellone,* so that English trade is carried out peacefully. This year, I have caused damage worth six million, I have only achieved one and a half. I would need six fifty-gun ships and twelve frigates; with that I would make six divisions that would ruin English trade. Even if we had no great successes on land, and the Indian trade were destroyed, the English would not wage war for long. The efforts being made indicate a decided desire to play a role in India. M. de Bussy will decide the operations. As I do not know too well what he will do with the squadron, since it is under his orders, I cannot say what will become of it. But, to succeed, it would be necessary that we be sent warnings in due time, very often, to inform us of the relief that is intended and of the movements of the English; 2nd that we not count on the provisions of the Cape, that the stop at False Bay be only to take on water, to rest; that we leave the sick there, that those who would pass would take them while leaving theirs; that we recommend the activity of which we no longer have any idea. M. de la Bourdonnais left Lorient in April, was at the Isle of France on August 14, armed his ships there for war, left on the 21st, and was on the coast on September 28. Our division left in February; She is not in the islands today, October 10th.

"They should send us good copper-lined vessels, and copper to line those that aren't, but we may not have time. This year will decide the fate of India."[436]

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IV

The French squadron dropped anchor off Achem on November 2, 1782. Our ships immediately began whatever work could be carried out on a harbor. The *Bellone* and the *Fine* were dispatched to the various trading posts the Dutch possessed in the strait, with the mission of bringing back supplies and equipment. To protect the fleet against any surprises, a ship was placed cruising to the west of the anchorage. Suffren hoped to be joined very promptly by Peynier's division. He assumed that General de Bussy would leave Achem before the northeast monsoon to go to Goudelour, where our military interests had long required his presence. On the 24th, a merchant ship, the *Duc-de-Chartres*, coming from the Isle of France with supplies and ammunition for the squadron, anchored at Achem, after having called successively at Galles, Trincomalee, and Goudelour. The captain of this vessel brought news of Admiral Hughes. Two days after our departure from Trincomalee, an extremely violent gale had forced the ships anchored in the harbor of Madras to put to sea. The ship, the *Superb*, had lost its mainmast, its mizzenmast, and its foremast, and several vessels were in danger of sinking. The English squadron having been carried south by the winds and currents, the admiral had judged that the return to Madras would present great difficulties, and he had headed for Bombay.

The epidemic, which had stopped M. de Peynier's division, was still raging among the crews and troops embarked on the convoy. M. de Bussy, who had himself fallen ill, wrote to the bailiff that he was unable to indicate precisely the time of his departure.[437]

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Finally, we learned from the Duc de Chartres that Sir Richard Bickerton, after appearing alternately on the Malabar Coast and the Coromandel Coast, had rallied Admiral Hughes at Bombay. The continual delays in the arrival of our reinforcements placed the squadron in a situation full of peril. As long as Suffren did not effect his junction with M. de Peynier's division, he would have six ships fewer than the enemy. Moreover, if the nabob, finding our alliance illusory, made peace with the English, what would be the fate of the Goudelour garrison? Suffren, recognizing that he could count only on himself, resolved to leave for the Coromandel Coast as soon as his ships were ready. He dispatched the Duc de Chartres to the Isle of France to inform M. de Bussy of his decision: "It would be too distressing," he wrote to him, "to reflect on what we could have done if the junction had been effective; we must only worry about the future. I really don't know how to make the Nabob have patience. I will tell him that you will come soon, and I have no doubt that, given the news that Trincomalee is ours, and the delay in your departure and that of the aviso, you have decided to go there. I will inform him of this course as being safer for our reunion, but likely to delay our arrival at the coast."

1. Admiral Bickerton had displayed unusual activity. He left England on February 6, 1782. Arriving in Rio de Janeiro on April 29, with a large number of sick people, he left again on June 3. Not finding the English squadron at Bombay, he returned to the Coromandel coast, and appeared off Madras a few days after Admiral Hughes' departure, that is to say, in October. He took the southern route again without losing any time and returned to Bombay. The extreme rapidity of the English admiral's movements formed an unfortunate contrast with the slowness of Peynier's division, without, moreover, this officer having anything to reproach himself for. The ship *Alexandre*, which had delayed its progress, had taken on up to forty-four inches of water per hour. The *Hardi* was also in poor condition. Suffren wrote to the minister about these two ships: "I will note that it is inconceivable that ships in the state of the *Hardi* and the *Alexandre* should be sent from Brest to India." In short, Bickerton's ships were in Bombay before ours were in the Isle of France. Mr. de Peynier's division had left on February 12.[438]

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These little subterfuges are so against my character that I'm afraid I'm going about them clumsily."

The frigates *Pourvoyeuse, Bellone,* and *Fine* returned to Achem in the first days of December. *Vengeur*, leaking worryingly, set sail directly for Trincomalee, where it was to be lowered under the escort of *Pourvoyeuse*. On December 20, Suffren set sail for the coast of Orixa, leaving *Fortune* at Achem. The captain of this corvette was tasked with directing several Dutch ships expected from Malacca with supplies to Trincomalee. Suffren, having become certain that Admiral Hughes had left for Bombay, had no need to worry about the English squadron. He intended to land north of Madras and proceed to Goudelour, following the coast very closely. He hoped to capture enough to provide our ships and troops with an abundance of rice. The *Hannibal* and the *Bellone* were sent to cruise the Ganges, where, by all appearances, these two vessels were to cause great harm to the enemy's trade.1

1. M. de Bussy had assured me, in three letters, that he would go to Achem. He did not order me to come, but that was enough for me. I wanted, by this, to put him in a position, by meeting to windward, to attack any point on the coast he wanted. I hoped to find some means of subsistence there. The demography experienced by M. Peynier's division prevented this meeting, which would have taken place quite peacefully at Achem. Now we have the English with eighteen vessels, twelve of which are copper-clad. I have twelve, of which only six are doubled, and several are in poor condition. I must therefore avoid the English; on the other hand, shutting ourselves up in Trinquemalay, we are dying of hunger. (Extract from a letter written by Suffren to the minister, before the departure of our squadron for the coast of Orixa.)[439]

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BOOK XV

The French squadron lands off Ganjam, on the Orixa coast. - Capture of the frigate *Cowentry*. - Death of Hyder-Ali. - Suffren surrenders to Goudelour and Trincomalee. - Arrival of Lieutenant General de Bussy. - The squadron carries the general and his troops to Goudelour. - Admiral Hughes, coming from Bombay, arrives on the Coromandel coast with eighteen ships. - Fifteen French ships leave Trincomalee to rescue Goudelour. - Battle of June 20. - Advantage won over the English. - Enthusiastic welcome given to Suffren by General de Bussy's troops. - News arrives in Madras that the preliminary articles of peace have been signed between France, Spain, England, and the United States. - Hostilities were suspended in India, on land and at sea, as of July 8, 1783.

I

The French squadron anchored on January 8 off Ganjam, on the Orixa coast. Several vessels, loaded with rice bound for Madras, were captured. The ships that were unable to follow us were burned after their cargo had been distributed among the vessels. On the 10th, at daybreak, the lookouts sighted a vessel anchored two miles southeast of the squadron. The officers of the *Héros* initially believed it to be the *Fine*, but upon closer examination, they recognized it as an English frigate. The order was immediately given to the *Saint-Michel* and the *Sphinx* to set sail. Before our vessels had set sail, the frigate had given chase, covering itself with canvas. The *Sphinx* and the *Saint-Michel*, having pursued it in vain for part of the day, rallied the squadron in the evening.[440]

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An enemy frigate, cruising in the Bay of Bengal, was captured the next day in circumstances worth reporting, in order to demonstrate the caution with which it is appropriate, in wartime, to approach unknown vessels. On January 11, shortly before sunset, our lookouts reported two vessels at a great distance to the south-southwest. Around ten o'clock, one of them was sighted heading towards the anchorage with a light offshore breeze. The weather was clear, and it wasn't long before they recognized an English frigate. While the *Héros* was preparing to sail, all the ships of the squadron were ready to open fire on the vessel in sight as soon as it came within range. At eleven thirty, the *Ajax*, the *Illustre*, and the *Brillant* began firing on the English frigate. The latter, after attempting to flee, which the weak breeze did not allow, lowered its flag. The frigate that had just fallen so easily into our hands was the *Cowentry*, carrying twenty-eight cannons. A few days earlier, a ship of the East India Company had been chased by the *Fine*. The captain, unaware that there were French warships in the gulf, had taken the frigate for a privateer. Having communicated with the *Cowentry* on January 10, he had informed her of this encounter, adding that the suspect vessel had headed for Ganjam, after having raised the chase. The commander of the *Cowentry*, Captain Wolseley, had headed in all haste to this point, with the fear of arriving too late to save from destruction a merchant fleet that he knew to be in this harbor. On seeing the high masts of our vessels, he believed he was in sight of the ships he wanted to protect. A short distance from the anchorage, where he arrived only very slowly due to the weakness of the breeze, he sent a boat with an officer on board the nearest vessel, in order to obtain some information about the alleged corsair.[441]

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The boat having been hailed in English by the *Ajax*, the officer of the *Cowentry* had boarded the vessel without hesitation, where he and his men were taken prisoner.[1] When the *Cowentry* left Madras, rumor had it that our faithful ally, the nabob Hyder-Ali, had died on December 7, 1782, after a short illness. Suffren, abandoning the expeditions he had planned to make to the coast, immediately set sail for Goudelour, where he anchored on February 6. The news announced by the English frigate was only too true. The most formidable adversary of British power in India was no longer with us. At the time this event occurred, Tippo-Saïb, his eldest son and heir, was fighting the English on the Malabar coast. The regular transfer of power was, at that time, a rare occurrence in that country. There was reason to fear that the treasures and possessions of the deceased Sultan would fall prey to the provincial governors, the neighboring nations of the new Kingdom of Mysore, and the English. The Indian army would have been dispersed, and the French corps would have been left without support. Colonel d'Hoffelize, wisely assessing the situation, had gone to Hyder-Ali's camp with his troops, ready to support Typpo-Saïb's cause with arms. The principal army leaders, devoted to Hyder-Ali, had hastened to convey to his eldest son the news of this death, which they had kept secret for as long as possible. Some officers, suspected of maintaining intelligence with the agents of the English company, had been imprisoned. The British troops, whose presence might have been enough to put the Indian army to flight, held in Madras by the lack of food, had not shown themselves.

1. What is most peculiar is that the general having sent a boat on board the *Illustre*, the skipper, being alone, had gone straight to the English frigate. But they were so convinced of the existence of the corsair that they had been taken for sailors of this vessel, and speaking to them ironically, already regarding them as assured prey, they had been sent to the steerage. At the first cannon shot, they had been made to come up and asked which vessels were anchored. One can imagine their surprise when they learned that it was M. de Suffren. (*Journal of the Major of the Squadron*.)[442]

Tippo Saib, who arrived at the camp on December 27, took command of the army without encountering any resistance.

The English generals operating on the Malabar Coast had been promptly informed of the sudden departure of Hyder Ali's son. They marched ahead and seized several very important places without a fight. Hyder Nagur, Hyder Ali's favorite residence, where part of his treasures were located, had been surrendered to the English by the governor. When this news reached the Coromandel Coast, Tippo Saib resolved to abandon the Carnatic to come to the aid of his states. M. Pivron de Morlat made vain efforts to persuade him to wait for the arrival of M. de Bussy before leaving. At that moment, our envoy said, a detachment would be taken from our army to join the Mysorean troops to go to the other coast to fight the English. Suffren's intervention, writing directly to the Sultan, was crowned with success. Tippo-Saïb promised to remain on the Coromandel Coast.

After a few days in Porto-Novo, Suffren set sail for Trincomalee, leaving the *Saint-Michel* and the *Cowentry* cruising off Madras. He was eager to repair his ships and stock up on provisions, so as to be ready to sail as soon as the English squadron appeared on the coast. He had the satisfaction of finding in the harbor of Trincomalee, where he anchored on February 23, 1783, two Dutch ships with munitions and provisions, prizes taken by the *Hannibal* and the *Bellone*, and the *Fortitude*, coming from Pegu, with a full cargo of timber.

It was only at this time that Suffren learned of his appointment to the rank of squadron leader. This award had been given to him immediately after the arrival in Paris of his report on the battle of Praya.[443]

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In a letter dated April 17, 1782, Marshal de Castries wrote to the bailiff. "By making you squadron leader, the King expected that you would not delay your return, and that you would fight the enemy in India until they were forced to desire a reasonable peace. I hope that you will not disappoint his expectations. I cannot express to you, Sir, the degree of confidence that your conduct has given you in your audacity and your talents. I hope that you will employ both second and first." The minister concluded another letter, dated July 20, 1785, with the following lines: "You have already acquired the rank of squadron leader by one action; I would like a second action as decisive as the first to put me in a position to make you take a step forward." Please count on my desire to contribute to the employment of your talents."

The minister attached the greatest importance to the Count of Orves, whose death he was unaware of at the time he wrote these dispatches, retaining a lieutenant such as Suffren. It will be recalled that the latter, wounded by his commander's actions upon the arrival of his division at the Île-de-France in October 1781, had asked Marshal de Castries to recall him to Europe. Since he had been at the head of the squadron, the bailiff feared nothing so much as obtaining this favor.[1] The Marshal's letters completely reassured him on this point. Suffren had no news of M. de Bussy.

1. "The landing of an army, the provisioning, and the command of a squadron provide a great deal of occupation. Since the battle of February 17, the English have not reappeared. Our landing was very peaceful. Here I am at sea; I would very much like to be able to give you good news, but to do that I must find the English and defeat them. I am in a superb position, commanding twelve ships of the line; but there are many buts... I fear, at present, that the Marquis de Castries will not grant me the favor I asked of him to bring me back, because nowhere could I be employed in such a brilliant manner."[444]

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The corvette *Fortune*, which he had left at Achem, arrived on February 21. During its cruise, it had not seen any ships coming from the Isle of France. Suffren, fearing that the nabob might drift away, sent M. de Moissac on a mission to him to urge him to remain on the Coromandel coast.

On March 2, the *Hannibal* and the *Bellone* rejoined the squadron, after capturing numerous prizes. The *San Carlos* had only escaped their pursuit by throwing its cannons into the sea and running aground on the sandbanks at the entrance to the Ganges. The *Saint-Michel* and the *Cowentry*, which returned a few days later, had captured or destroyed twelve merchant vessels. On the 9th, the frigate *Cléopâtre*, the ships *Fendant*, on which Lieutenant General de Bussy had taken passage, the *Argonaute*, the *Hardi* and thirty-five transport vessels anchored in the harbor. The convoy carried provisions, munitions and 2,500 soldiers. The ship *Alexandre* was to join the army very soon. The situation of our affairs, at the time when the new commander-in-chief arrived at his post, was far from satisfactory. The English forces operating on the Malabar coast had made very rapid progress. They had seized the port of Mangalore which sheltered the navy created by Hyder-Ali. Tippo-Saïb, tired of waiting for M. de Bussy, had gone by forced marches to the aid of his States. Colonel d'Hoffelize had agreed, at his earnest request, to give him an infantry battalion and an artillery company under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Cossigny. The French, too weakened to hold the field, had returned to Goudelour. Such were the consequences of the general's delays in the departure of Peynier's division.

The epidemic that had plagued the crews and the passing troops had ceased at the beginning of November. If the general had left immediately, he would have arrived on the Coromandel Coast in January 1783.[445]

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Our troops, joined with those of the nabob, would have been in a position to lay siege to Madras. We would have had, if not the certainty, at least a very serious chance of capturing this city before the English squadron appeared. The successes obtained in the Carnatic would have compensated for the losses suffered by Tippo Saib off the Malabar coast. Having taken the unfortunate decision to wait until the *Hardi* was repaired, M. de Bussy had not left the Isle de France until December 26, 1782. The general was not in a state of health that allowed him to exercise his command. Not only did he not ride a horse, but the fatigue of the palanquin was beyond his strength. Among the officers in his entourage, there was not one who, in Suffren's opinion, had the necessary capacity to replace him. If it was urgent to bring the expeditionary force to Goudelour, on the other hand, the execution of this measure presented great difficulties. Time had marched on, and we could, every day, receive the news that Admiral Hughes was on the coast with seventeen ships. Suffren, obliged to leave the *Brillant* and the *Vengeur* at Trincomalee, which had been wrecked, had only thirteen ships at his disposal. He resolved to put to sea with the copper-lined vessels and a few merchant ships that were sailing well. The bailiff proposed to transport the troops and part of the artillery equipment. A favorable circumstance would have been awaited to send the army's food and baggage. There was reason to believe that the operation, thus carried out, would be completed before the arrival of Admiral Hughes. If the English squadron appeared, Suffren had no doubt that he would succeed in avoiding it. On March 14, the *Héros*, the *Fendant* and the *Argonaute* of seventy-four, the *Sphinx* and the *Artésien*, of sixty-four, the *Saint-Michel* of sixty, the *Hannibal*, of fifty, the frigates the *Cléopâtre*, the *Fine*, the *Bellone*, of thirty-two, the *Cowentry*, of twenty-eight, the *Fortune*, of eighteen, left Trincomalee.[446]

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On the 16th, at sunset, the squadron dropped anchor off Porto-Novo. The troops were put ashore during the night, and the next day, the 17th, Suffren went to Goudelour, where he unloaded the equipment and ammunition. On April 4, after spending a few days in Porto-Novo taking on water, Suffren put to sea again, leaving the *Fendant*, the *Saint-Michel*, and the *Cléopâtre* cruising off Madras. He hoped that this division would intercept a convoy coming from Europe, escorted by the fifty-gun ship *Bristol*. On April 10, he was returning to Trincomalee when the frigate *Bellone* reported the English squadron to the south. We had learned that Admiral Hughes was bringing troops on board his ships to join the British forces in Tanjaour. Assuming the accuracy of this news, M. de Bussy would soon be surrounded to the south by the small army of Tanjaour, and to the north by the soldiers of Sir Eyre Coot. Finally, there was reason to believe that Goudelour's communications with Trinquemalay would be cut by the English squadron. "Given this frightening position," Suffren wrote to the minister on April 11, "it is necessary that I leave as soon as M. de Peynier has joined me. I will disarm the frigates, I will take the crews of the transports and I will risk the fate of the battles. As I cannot leave for twenty days, the monsoon will be reversed, and I can hope to fight to the wind. I would like, but I dare not flatter myself, that the relief sent in October would have arrived by this time. "Admiral Hughes, having learned on April 11th from a neutral vessel that we had ships cruising along the coast, hastened his march in the hope of intercepting them. Arriving at Madras without having seen them, he detached four ships and a frigate in pursuit.

1. "Given the order to disembark the troops during the night with the necessary provisions. M. de Bussy is to go to Goudelour in a palanquin, still very ill with gout, having no use of his hands at all. He would have difficulty disembarking from a chelingue, the only vessel capable of reaching Goudelour." (*Journal of the Major of the Squadron*.)[447]

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After racing for several days in the direction of Trincomalee, the English division returned to anchor, accompanying the *Bristol*, which it had encountered at sea. Suffren dispatched the corvette *Naïade* to warn M. de Bussy of the presence of the English squadron and to recall the ships off Madras. The mission entrusted to this corvette had even less chance of success, as it was sailing very poorly. The bailiff, probably wanting to compensate for the ship's defects with the valour of the captain, had appointed M. de Villaret-Joyeuse, captain of the *Bellone*, to command it. This officer had crossed over to his new vessel a few hours before setting sail. The *Saint-Michel*, the *Fendant*, and the *Cléopâtre* returned on April 20 without having sighted the enemy. As for the *Naïade*, it was captured by the seventy-four-man ship, the *Sceptre*, after a very fine fight.[1]

1. This was the expression Suffren used when reporting to the minister the capture of the *Naiad* by the *Sceptre*. We enclose here the report that Captain Villaret-Joyeuse sent from Madras to General de Bussy: "On the 14th, I became aware, at daybreak, of a large vessel cruising between Goudelour and Porto-Novo. Having no doubt that this vessel was an enemy, I put to sea immediately so as not to compromise my mission. I was at least three leagues to windward of the vessel, which I recognized as the Sceptre, which had already chased the *Bellone* several times. My corvette was not moving, but the enemy was moving very well, and was able to hold me during the night. From ten o'clock in the evening, he began to cannonade me, and around eleven o'clock, he hailed me and announced his strength to urge me not to resist. I sent him my broadside as his only response, and from that moment began the most unequal and stubborn combat. I sent him from one thousand to twelve hundred cannonballs during our engagement which lasted five hours, three and a half hours of which were yard to yard. My topmasts having finally been cut, as well as my rudder, seven guns dismantled, my lower masts pierced from side to side, ready to fall, and thirty-four men out of action, I was finally obliged, my general, to save the rest of the brave men entrusted to me, to yield to force. The mainmast of my enemy was injured, his mainmast broken, a gun of his first battery dismantled and the seven crewmen killed or wounded. He had twenty-two men out of action and two officers. I was fortunate enough not to lose any of them, and they behaved so superbly that I will only mention my second in command, the Chevalier de Saint-Georges, who remained alone on the forecastle. I was taken to the tow in front of Madras. I received the most flattering welcome from the land and sea officers who regarded my combat as a phenomenon.[448]

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Suffren, receiving no news from the coast, sent the *Cowentry* to Goudelour. On May 12, this frigate brought letters from the general ordering Suffren to set sail with the entire squadron to bring him supplies and ammunition. Since our ships had not completed their repairs, Suffren could not carry out this order. Moreover, it would have been very imprudent to delay the resupply of Goudelour with part of our forces. On May 24, the English squadron, seventeen ships strong, was sighted off Trincomalee heading south. The *Cowentry*, sent to observe its movements, returned after following it as far as Batacalo. Suffren wondered what Admiral Hughes's plans might be. Had he positioned himself in the south of Trincomalee to intercept the French ships coming from the Ile de France, or to ensure the arrival of a convoy expected from England? Did he want, by leaving the northern route free, to encourage us to take it with the intention of heading for Trincomalee as soon as we had left? This supposition was the most plausible, but Suffren was not a man to be taken in such a trap. The existence of our squadron in the Indian seas was linked to the possession of Trincomalee. How would we have managed if, after so much fighting, we had not had this port to careen the *Brillant* and the *Vengeur*, and to make several vessels undergo repairs that it would have been impossible to carry out on the coast. The damaged ships, or rather the entire squadron, would have been obliged to return to the Isle of France a long time ago. Although all our vessels were, on May 26, ready to put to sea, the bailiff resolved, despite M. de Bussy's instructions to the contrary, to remain at anchor. He sent two transports with provisions and artillery to Goudelour, escorted by the *Fendant*, the *Cléopâtre* and the *Cowentry*. He thought, which was true, that the eighteenth English vessel, the Bristol, had remained cruising in the north.[449]

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The English squadron reappeared on May 31, and that day, it came very close to the entrance to Trincomalee. Suffren, believing that Admiral Hughes intended to attack us, signaled the squadron, anchored in line in the bay off the coast, to moor and prepare for combat. The enemy moved away, and our lookouts lost sight of them as they headed north. The next day, the bailiff, concerned about the dangers facing the ships bound for Goudelour, sent a boat along the coast to warn them of the enemy's presence and advise them to sail very close to land. This division was, on June 3, a short distance from Trincomalee, when the frigate marching ahead became aware of the English squadron. M. de Peynier signaled the two transports to take the landward course. As for him, he ran north-northwest with the two frigates, dragging the enemy in his wake. He took a wrong turn during the night, and when day broke, he no longer saw a single one of the ships that were pursuing him. Commander de Peynier returned on June 10 to Trincomalee, where the two transports had arrived three days earlier. The news that this officer brought from the army was very alarming. Our troops still occupied some positions outside Goudelour, but it was easy to foresee that they would very soon be forced to withdraw to the place. General Stuart, whose forces were already superior to ours, was expecting considerable reinforcements from Madras. Tippo-Saïb had recaptured Hyder Nagur and inflicted on General Mathews an extremely serious check. Nevertheless, a considerable time would pass before he was able to reach the Coromandel coast. M. de Bussy, returning to the order he had previously given, wrote to Suffren by the *Cowentry* not to leave Trincomalee, "except in the case where, forced into his entrenchments, he would be obliged to withdraw into Goudelour, and the case where the English squadron would blockade him."[450]

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The general's instructions were not sufficiently clear, and upon receiving them, anyone other than Suffren would have been left in great perplexity. How could he be informed of the precise moment when our troops, forced into their entrenchments, would re-enter Goudelour? Moreover, by remaining in Trincomalee, it was difficult to know the movements of the English squadron and whether it was blockading the city. This latter possibility was not in doubt, and it was surprising that Mr. de Bussy had spoken of it hypothetically. There was no reason to doubt that Admiral Hughes was assisting the operations of the British troops. Had General de Bussy intended, by giving ambiguous orders, to leave Suffren responsible for the sortie of our squadron and the events that would follow? When he learned of M. de Bussy's dispatches, the bailiff called the captains on board. After explaining the situation of our troops, he consulted them on the conduct the navy should adopt. All were of the opinion that we should risk the fate of arms to rescue Goudelour. The next day, May 11, the French squadron, consisting of fifteen ships and three frigates, put to sea. Admiral Hughes had three ships, including one of eighty, more than the French. With the exception of the *Bristol*, which had recently arrived from Europe, all the English ships had spent the wintering season in Bombay, where they had found all the resources that a well-stocked arsenal could offer. This squadron, almost all of whose ships were lined with copper, had qualities of march and maneuverability that ours completely lacked. Most of our ships, of which only eight were lined with copper, had not been careened for four or five years. Some, notably the *Saint-Michel* and the *Illustre*, were leaking a lot. Our situation, in terms of personnel, was no more satisfactory. Since leaving the Ile de France on December 7, 1781, we had not received a single sailor to fill the gaps in the crews.[451]

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Despite the loss of the *Orient* and the *Bizarre* and the disarmament of all the transports and several frigates, there was not a single vessel with more than three-quarters of its regular complement. We must add that soldiers and sepoys accounted for half of these reduced crews.

II

On June 13, the discovery frigates reported the English squadron anchored a short distance from Goudelour. In the evening, with the weather calm, the French dropped anchor eight leagues south of the town. They set sail the next day, but for three days, the light breeze prevented us from approaching the enemy. On June 16, around noon, with the winds blowing north-northwest, we were only three leagues behind the English when they decided to set sail. The breeze having jumped to the southeast and east, Admiral Hughes, who had taken the broad tack, had the advantage of the wind over us. Suffren formed the line of battle, the tacks to starboard, but night fell before the two armies were close enough to each other to engage in combat. The next day, the winds having returned to the west and the English squadron being more than five leagues to leeward, Suffren communicated with M. de Bussy. He learned that we had had, on June 13, a very lively engagement with the besiegers. Five hundred men of our small army had been put out of action, and twelve pieces of cannon had fallen into the hands of the English. Although the enemy had suffered very heavy losses, we had been obliged, as a result of this affair, to withdraw into the city. Well convinced that the English admiral would try to drag him out to sea if he let the boat go to join him, Suffren kept close to land.[452]

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On the evening of the 17th, with the winds remaining westerly, the French squadron dropped anchor off Goudelour. With the fate of the town and the garrison now depending on the success of our squadron, General de Bussy hastened to give the bailiff the necessary number of men to complete his crews. During the night of June 17th to 18th, six hundred soldiers and six hundred sepoys were distributed among the ships. On the 18th, at nine o'clock in the morning, the French set sail to meet the English. Our squadron, formed in line of battle with its tacks to starboard, passed to the opposite side and to windward of the enemy. Admiral Hughes, thanks to the superior speed of his ships, was easily able to decline an engagement we appeared to be seeking. On June 19, the two armies moved with light and irregular breezes, and they had great difficulty maintaining order. The persistence of westerly winds, very rare at this time of year, deceived the calculations of the English admiral. He had counted on the offshore breeze to fight us with the advantage of the wind, and, since June 14, his ships had been constantly to leeward of ours. During the day of June 20, it seemed that our adversaries, tired of waiting for easterly winds, had decided to accept combat. Around three o'clock, with the breeze blowing from the west to the west-northwest, the English squadron held the wind under small sails, tacks to port. The French fleet, which was running on the same tack, let itself bear upon the enemy by a movement all at once. A little after four o'clock, the two lines being within close cannon range, the order to come to windward and begin firing was hoisted aboard the frigate *Cléopâtre*, on which Suffren had flown his flag.[1]

1. Suffren had received, a few months earlier, the minister's dispatch ordering the commander of a squadron of more than nine ships to transfer to a frigate in the event of combat. I will comply with this order, he had replied to Marshal de Castries, as far as I consider it useful for the good of the service. It would be a disservice to the spirit of this order to take advantage of it to fail to set the example that a leader must on occasions when he can command from his ship as well as elsewhere."[453]

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The fighting on both sides was very vigorous, but the action was particularly fierce in the vanguard and main body. There was some disorder among the ships of the two rearguards. In ours, the *Vengeur* and the *Annibal* collided and suffered some damage. The firing ceased around 6:30, and by 7:00, both squadrons were out of cannon range.[1] The French anchored the next day, June 21, two leagues north of Pondicherry. In the evening, the discovery frigate having reported the enemy, our ships were ready to sail. On the 22nd, at daybreak, the English were sighted to leeward, heading for Madras. Suffren was on the point of setting sail by cutting the cables and pursuing them. Various considerations, which we find set out in one of his letters, prevented him from taking this course. "My first impulse," he wrote to the minister, "was to cut the cables and chase them away. These are the reasons that prevented me: I was too short of anchors and cables to make the sacrifice; 2° Goudelour was under attack and I had twelve hundred men from its garrison. This squadron, having a great superiority of speed over mine and chasing to the east-northeast, could take me far enough to no longer be able to return to the coast, and it would have reached Madras without difficulty. At this time of year, ships that sail poorly do not reach the coast when they leave it.

1. Before leaving Trincomalee, Suffren had indicated an order of battle in which the five ships of seventy-four took the rear of the line. Assuming the army was arranged in this order, called order of battle no. 3 in the Journal of the Major of the Squadron, these five ships were instructed to double the enemy from the rearguard. As for the other ships of the army, they were to position themselves at a great distance from each other and fight the entire English line. On June 14 and 15, order of battle no. 3 had been indicated. On June 20, no incident had probably occurred that would allow this combination to be applied.

We read in the Journal of the Major of the Squadron for the 14th: “That day, the general, on the Cleopatra, arrived with all sails set upon an English frigate that had come to observe us. It was a league and a half from us.” The following tables show the order in which the two squadrons were deployed on June 20 and the losses they suffered.[454]

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Last year, an English colonel was captured at Porto-Novo, on the fifty-eighth day after his departure from Madras. The French squadron headed for Goudelour, where Suffren was eager to arrive.

We indicate, in the tables below, the order in which the two squadrons were arrayed on June 20, and the losses they had suffered.

ESCADRE FRANÇAISE.

Ligne de bataille.

Noms des bâtiments.	Nombre de canons.	Noms des capitaines.	Tués.	Blessés.
		Avant-garde.		
Sphinx	64	Du Chilleau	8	33
Brillant	64	Kersauson	7	18
Fendant	74	Peynier	11	55
Flamand	50	Salvert	17	42
L'Ajax	64	Dupas de la Mancelière	4	25
		Corps de bataille.		
Hannibal	50	Beaulieu	2	16
Argonaute	74	Clavières	10	25
Héros	74	Moissac	15	45
L'Illustre	74	Bruyères	4	20
Saint-Michel	60	Beaumont	5	25
		Arrière-garde.		
Vengeur	64	Cuverville	10	21
Sévère	64	De Langle	2	21
Annibal	74	D'Aymar	5	14
Hardi	64	Herhué	0	4
Artésien	64	De Vignes	2	20
Consolante		Costebelle	0	2
Total killed and wounded:[1]			102	386

1. Officers killed: Messrs. Dupas de la Manceliere, Perrier, and de Salvert, naval lieutenants; de Robinot, ensign; Dieu, fireship captain; l'Isselée, and de Lessègues, auxiliary officers; Dumoulin, infantry officer. Officers wounded: Messrs. de Saint-Félix, naval captain; de Ravenel, naval lieutenant; de Poignat, de Bonnevie, and de Than, ensigns; Croignard, fireship captain; de Gourdun, auxiliary officer; de Villione, d'Egmont, de Lesquin, and Flantin, infantry officers.[455]

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ESCADRE ANGLAISE.

Ligne de bataille.

Noms des bâtiments.	Nombre de canons.	Noms des capitaines.	Tues.	Blessés.
		Division rouge.		
Cumberland	74	William Allen	2	11
Montmouth	64	James Alms	2	19
Bristol	50	James Burney	0	13
Hero	74	Richard King, commodore Théophile Jones	5	21
Eagle	64	Williams Clark	4	8
Magnanime	64	Thomas Mackensie	1	16
		Division bleue.		
Sceptre	64	Samuel Graves	17	47
Burford	70	Peter Rainier	10	20
Monarca	68	John Gell	6	14
Superb	74	Sir Edw. Hughes Vice admiral of the Bleue. Henry New Come	12 » 4	41 » »
Sultan	74	Audren Mitchell	4	20
Africa	64	Robert M. Donall	5	25
Worcester	64	Charles Hughes	8	32
		Division blanche.		
Exeter	64	John Smith	4	9
Inflexible	64	Hon J.-W. Chetiwind	3	30
Gibraltar	80	Sir R. Bikerton, contre-amiral	6	40
Isis	50	Thomas Hicks	3	30
Defense	74	Christopher Halliday	7	38
		Totaux des tués et des blessés	103	434

The success of the French squadron was beyond dispute. On June 13, Admiral Hughes blockaded Goudelour with eighteen ships and six frigates. He also protected the landing of troops, supplies, and munitions sent from Madras to the English army. When Suffren positioned himself between the British fleet and the besieged city, the numerous transports anchored on the coast hastened to flee, cutting their cables. After the battle of June 20, Admiral Hughes disappeared, abandoning General Stuart, while we took, off Goudelour, the position the English squadron had occupied a few days earlier. Although the enemy had not left a single ship in our hands, there could be no doubt about the outcome of this encounter.

Suffren appeared satisfied with the conduct of his captains. He particularly praised the skillful leadership given to the vanguard by M. de Peynier. In a letter dated July 6, he told the minister: "The superiority of the English squadron over ours consisted of a ship of eighty, one of seventy-four, and one of seventy. M. de Peynier led the vanguard with as much valor as precision. Since he joined me, I have given him two equally important and perilous missions, which he has acquitted himself perfectly. If, for this reason, you make him squadron leader, and it is only to take rank, it is not enough in truth, especially since in the battle of Grenada and in those of M. de Guichen, he conducted himself perfectly well." Three days after the battle of June 20, the French squadron anchored in the harbor of Goudelour.

1. Suffren said to the minister in another letter: "I am sending you the status of the squadron's losses. I will wait until I am with you to ask for pardons for the officers. But I repeat my request for M. de Peynier. He acquitted himself particularly well of two very difficult missions, and he conducted himself, in the battle of June 20, with as much bravery as intelligence. If particular reasons prevent you from making him squadron leader, nothing can prevent you from giving him the red cord."[456]

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As soon as our ships anchored, Suffren went to see M. de Bussy. Upon his arrival on land, the city's batteries saluted him with fifteen cannon shots. The officers and soldiers who were not kept at their posts by imperative duty had moved towards the beach. The bailiff went to the general's house, followed by a huge procession that filled the air with cries of "Long live the King! and Long live Suffren!" The same demonstrations took place when he separated from the commander-in-chief to return to his boat. The soldiers and sepoys, borrowed from M. de Bussy's army, returned to land. The squadron landed a thousand men, taken from among the marines and sailors, to reinforce the garrison.

Suffren's victory had completely changed the situation of the British troops. General Stuart could no longer receive his supplies by sea. On the other hand, a detachment of Mysorean cavalry, very well commanded, was pounding the countryside and cutting off his communications with Madras. Suffren, convinced that a general sortie would lead to the retreat of the enemy, wanted this operation to be attempted.[1] This advice having been rejected, the bailiff remained unaware of the measures taken by General de Bussy. On June 29, an English frigate, the *Médée*, flying the parliamentary flag, appeared off Goudelour. It was charged by Lord Macarteney, Governor of the Presidency of Madras, and Admiral Hughes to inform us that hostilities had ceased in Europe. This news, which the English regarded as authentic, although it had no official character, had arrived in Bombay by land.

1. The presence of such a man, wrote the head of the English army, speaking of Suffren, obliges us to make our approaches with the greatest caution. He urges M. de Bussy to attack us. He offers to disembark the greater part of his crews and to lead them himself to the assault of our camp.[457]

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The captain of the *Médée* handed over to Messrs. de Bussy and de Suffren the journals and copies of private letters mentioning the preliminary articles of peace signed in Paris on January 20, 1783, by the representatives of France, England, Spain, and the United States. Lord Macarteney and Admiral Hughes requested that a suspension of arms be concluded until the arrival of instructions from the courts of London and Paris. General de Bussy, whose role as commander-in-chief of the land and sea forces was to decide on this proposal, found himself very embarrassed by his role. The English wanted to regain their freedom of action as quickly as possible in order to march with all their forces against Tippo Saïb. It was obvious that their approach had no other purpose. If the general refused the suspension of arms, he assumed a grave responsibility, and if he accepted it, what would become of our ally? The commissioners who came to the Medea declared that the British authorities had decided to give the generals the order not to fire another shot. M. de Bussy tried to safeguard Tippo Saīb's interests. The English promised to enter into arrangements with the Sultan as soon as he was willing to negotiate, but they would not make any commitment regarding the conditions of peace. If, as Suffren said in one of his letters, "we had waged the war better, the agreement, on this point, would have been easier." Military successes would have allowed us to make demands that our situation did not allow. The general decided to send the major of the squadron and two of his aides-de-camp to Madras with the necessary powers to conclude a suspension of arms. These three officers arrived in the first days of July with Admiral Hughes and Lord Macarteney. It was decided that hostilities would cease, on land and at sea, from July 8, and that the prisoners would be immediately returned. On August 1, Suffren set sail for Trincomalee, where he anchored on the 6th, after touching at Tranquebar and Karaikal. The squadron completed six months' supplies, took on water, and was ready to sail.[458]

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On September 13, the *Sphinx* and the *Artésien* departed for the Isle of France, where they were to be prepared to return to Europe.

III

At the origin of the troubles in America, there existed, in the Parliament of Great Britain, a political party that absolutely rejected the use of force to resolve the outstanding difficulties. After the outbreak of hostilities, these same men energetically fought Lord North's administration. The setbacks suffered by the English forces, and especially the capitulation at York Town, increased the number of their members. By the end of 1781, there were no illusions in either chamber about the state of affairs. The American colonies were considered irrevocably lost to England. Nevertheless, the ministry, supported by the King, wanted to continue the fight. On February 22, 1782, General Conway presented a motion to the House of Commons calling upon the government to terminate the American war. This proposal was supported by men such as Fox, Pitt, Mahon, Burke, Cavendish, and Wilberforce. It was defeated by a majority of one; but an attempt of the same kind, made a few days later, was completely successful. The House resolved, on February 27, by a majority of nineteen votes, that an address should be sent to the King, praying him to make peace with the colonies. On March 4 and 5, resolutions of the same nature were adopted by a constantly increasing majority. The news of the capture of the island of St. Christopher and the loss of Minorca increased the general discontent. On March 20, Lord North resigned. The Marquis of Rockingham, after assuring himself that the King would not oppose the recognition of the independence of America, accepted the mission of forming a new cabinet.[459]

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Lord Shelburne took over, in the new administration, the Ministry of the Interior, the department to which the colonies were attached. He immediately sent an agent of his complete confidence to Paris. This agent had no official status, but private letters assured him of a very warm welcome from our Minister of Foreign Affairs and the United States envoy. He was to inform his government of the conditions under which it would be possible to make peace. The death of the Marquis of Rockingham, which occurred in June, placed Lord Shelburne at the head of the cabinet. This statesman had been one of the most determined champions of the war party. He had called for the use of energetic means to bring the rebels back to obedience. Events had changed his opinion, and he was convinced that the recognition of the North American colonies as an independent state was the wisest measure his country could adopt. The negotiations begun in Paris, although pursued in good faith on both sides, progressed slowly. The English government, willing to give full satisfaction on the American question, demanded that, with regard to France and Spain, they be held to the clauses of the treaty of 1763. It was not to achieve this result that we had taken up arms in 1778. On the other hand, the American commissioners were extremely demanding in all discussions relating to their new borders. Finally, the Spanish did not want anyone to talk about peace unless they were assured possession of Gibraltar. After long and laborious negotiations, these difficulties were resolved. On November 30, 1782, a first treaty was concluded between the English and American plenipotentiaries. On January 23, 1783, the preliminary peace treaties between France, Spain, and Great Britain were signed in Paris.

It was in Pondicherry, where he was on September 8, with the *Héros* and the *Cléopâtre*, that the first dispatches relating to peace reached Suffren.[460]

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They had been brought to Madras by the English frigate *Crocodile*, which had left Portsmouth on April 14, 1783. We were to leave the same number of ships in India as the English, and send the others back to France. The seventy-four and the frigates returned to Brest, the sixty-four to Rochefort, with the exception of the *Hardi* and the *Alexandre*, which were going to Toulon. Admiral Hughes having informed us that five English vessels would remain on the coast, Suffren designated the *Fendant*, the *Argonaute*, the *Brillant*, the *Saint-Michel*, the *Hannibal*, and the frigates *Surveillante, Bellone*, and *Cowentry* to be part of the French station. This division was placed under the command of M. de Peynier.

Suffren had been appointed squadron leader for the Praya affair. After the battles of February 17, April 12, and July 6, the King appointed him lieutenant general. Marshal de Castries announced this news to him in the following terms: "The greatest pleasure that a minister of the King can experience in his position, Sir, is to be able to contribute to the advancement of a general officer as distinguished as you, who shows decided talents for the command of his armies. Although His Majesty intends to reward you, he has proposed, at the same time, by giving you the rank of lieutenant general, to give you the means to render us new services. The King was particularly struck, in the accounts you gave him, by the truth and the force with which you spoke to him of those officers of his navy who had served him well or badly on the various occasions when you fought the English."

After having agreed with Mr. de Bussy on all the arrangements relating to the departure of the ships returning to France, Suffren went to Trincomalee[1].

1. We have embarked about sixty Indian men and women, canvas workers, whom the general intends to send to Malta. (*Journal of the squadron major*.)[461]

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The *Illustre*, the *Hardi*, the *Annibal*, and the *Ajax* left directly for Europe, with permission to stop at the Cape of Good Hope. The *Héros*, escorting the *Vengeur*, which was taking on a lot of water, set sail on October 6 for the Isle of France.[1] These two vessels anchored on November 12 in the harbor of Port Louis.

The inhabitants of the Isle of France and Bourbon had followed the events that had unfolded on the Coromandel Coast with passionate interest. They had taken part in the struggle, providing companies of volunteers who had fought on land and on our ships. Closer to the events than we were, it seemed that Suffren was their hero before being that of France. When his arrival was known, the island's population rushed to Port Louis to see the illustrious admiral and to show him the admiration they felt for him. The squadron major recounts the reception given to Suffren in his journal as follows:[2] "At five thirty, the general went ashore. He was saluted, upon disembarking, with twenty-one cannon shots from the square, and received by the governor, the officers of the garrison, the inhabitants, and an infinite crowd that made the air resound with cries of: Long live the King, long live Suffren!

1. Friday, November 7, 1783, in sight of Rodrigues. The observation is very accurate given the distance of the moon from the sun. (*Journal of the squadron's major*.)

2. I can tell you that the esteem I have in India is incredible: verses, songs, etc. But beware of setbacks; the slightest would be enough for the handclaps to turn into whistles.

I don't know, because no one has written to me, the ministry's letters having been lost, what esteem I have in France, and how the public has taken my premature advancement; but in India, especially in Madras, and in our islands of France and Bourbon, I am infinitely more highly regarded than I deserve. I am overwhelmed with verses, songs, etc. If I go to the Isle of France, they will do crazy things, if their enthusiasm has not cooled. (*Private letter from Suffren, February 6, 1783*.)[462]

The regimental bands escorted him, along with everyone else, to the government building, where he had supper. After supper, all the ladies of the town came to visit him and serenaded him. The *Héros*, accompanied by the frigate *Cléopâtre*, left the Isle de France on November 29 and anchored at Table Bay on December 22. When Suffren went ashore, he was received by the governor surrounded by the colony's principal officials. The entire garrison was under arms, and a twenty-one-gun salute was fired in his honor. Nine English vessels, returning from India, were anchored in the harbor. The captains of these vessels showed particular eagerness to pay their respects to the leader of the French squadron.[1] Since the state of the *Héros* did not allow this vessel to go to Brest, Suffren informed the minister that he would go to Toulon. He set sail from Table Bay on January 3, 1784, with the *Cléopâtre*, signaling her, as soon as she was out of the harbor, to proceed unhindered to her destination. The *Héros* sighted of Cape Spartel on March 19, and on the 26th, she dropped anchor in the harbor of Toulon.[2]

IV

The Indian campaign will remain famous in the military annals of our country.

1. I would make your head spin if I told you how I was received.... The good Dutch received me here as their liberator.... But among the tributes that flattered me the most, there is none that gave me more pleasure than the esteem and consideration shown to me by the English who are here.

2. Lieutenant de Moissac, who had the great honor of being both Suffren's flag captain and his chief of staff (squadron major) during this campaign, sent the following letter to the Minister of the Navy upon disembarking from the *Héros*: Bailiff de Suffren has reserved the right to report to you on the officers who served on the ship as well as the various events of the campaign. The zeal with which I carried out the general's orders, whether as flag captain or as squadron major, or in the various missions he deigned to entrust to me, may lead me to hope for your satisfaction with me and earn me your esteem. I would regard this reward as flattering to me as the favors you would deign to intercede for me with His Majesty. Although I have just arrived from a long and arduous campaign, I will always be ready to carry out His Majesty's orders, if he judges it appropriate to employ me."[463]

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It can rightly be considered Suffren's personal work. As soon as this great man took command of the India squadron, everything changed. Count d'Orves's hesitations were replaced by a clear and determined course of action. He recognized the need to form a close alliance with Hyder Ali, and once he had committed himself to remaining in India, nothing could divert him from the path he had chosen. Without ports or stores, he managed, after the battles of February 17, April 12, and July 6, to sustain and repair his squadron. It was not until the month of August, that is, nearly nine months after his departure from the Isle of France, that the *Illustre* and the *Saint-Michel* arrived at the Coromandel coast with a convoy. "It has been eight months," wrote Suffren in a letter dated October 10, 1782, "that I have been in India, ten months since my departure from the Isle of France. I left with six months' worth of provisions and could not be worse off in terms of spare parts. I only received help from the islands a month and a half ago. I have fought four battles, I have lost three main masts, although I was without stores and without resources. By dint of good fortune and good conduct, we still exist. M. d'Apche, having Pondicherry and the Dutch ports well equipped, was never able to stay three months in India." After each battle, as soon as his ships were in a state to hold the sea, he resumed, with an ardor that never wavered, the pursuit of the English squadron. He wanted, by a victory, to ensure freedom of movement and the possibility of taking from the enemy the points that the latter occupied on the coast. While the English ships repaired the damage they had suffered in the battle of July 6, Suffren seized Trincomalee.[464]

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On July 6, Suffren seized Trincomalee. Admiral Hughes, suspecting his adversary's plans too late, headed for the eastern coast of Ceylon, but he only appeared in sight of the port on September 2, to see the French flag flying over the forts. In the struggle on the Coromandel Coast, the capture of Trincomalee was an event of the utmost importance. We had a port, while the English were now condemned to anchor in uninhabited harbors. At the moment when, after so much effort and overcome difficulties, Suffren saw the state of his affairs take a more favorable turn, fortune subjected the steadfastness of his soul to new tests. He lost the *Orient* at the entrance to Trincomalee, and the *Bizarre* off Goudelour. He learned of the arrival of Sir Richard Bickerton with six ships at the same time as he received news of the capture or dispersal of two of our convoys. Finally, Mr. de Peynier's division was held up at the Isle of France by an epidemic that was raging with great force among the troops and crews. Such was our situation when the wintering season forced the two squadrons to abandon the Coromandel coast. Suffren, fearing that he would not find sufficient resources in Trincomalee to support his squadron, decided to go to Achem. The English, driven by the bad weather from the harbor of Madras, set sail for Bombay.

Having left Achem in December 1782, the French squadron appeared near Ganjam at the beginning of 1783. Suffren had intended to attack some of the English establishments situated on the coast of Orixa, but the death of Hyder-Ali abruptly recalled him to Goudelour. M. de Bussy, having extended his stay at the Isle of France by a month to await the *Hardi*, did not reach Trinquemalay until the end of March. Although the arrival of the English squadron was very imminent, it was imperatively necessary to rescue our soldiers, seriously threatened by General Stuart.[465]

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Suffren had the troops and artillery embarked on the copper-lined vessels and the fast-moving transports, and, without worrying about the seventeen vessels that Admiral Hughes was bringing from Bombay, he went to Goudelour. Just as the French were returning to Trincomalee, the English squadron was sighted heading north. Tippo-Saïb, tired of waiting for General de Bussy, had left for the Malabar Coast. Moreover, the English generals had received numerous reinforcements. Our small fleet, which would have played an important role a few months earlier, was forced to shut itself up in Goudelour. Suffren set sail from Trincomalee with fifteen vessels, almost all of which were in poor condition in terms of both equipment and personnel. Through the skill of his maneuvers, he forced his adversary to put to sea. Having achieved this initial success, he communicated with the town. After supplementing his crews with troops borrowed from the garrison, he advanced to meet the enemy. The encounter between the two fleets took place on the 21st, and on the 23rd, the French returned to the harbor of Goudelour. As for the English, although they had eighteen ships, they abandoned General Stuart and withdrew to Madras. This affair, which brought the greatest honor not only to Suffren, but to our entire squadron, brought a brilliant end to the campaign.

During his command, Suffren's conduct was in constant opposition to his instructions. He considered them null and void whenever he deemed them contrary to the interests of France. It would be a mistake to believe that his attitude towards the minister, M. de Bussy, and M. de Souillac had, in any degree, the character of indiscipline or disobedience. He expressed himself in his official correspondence with complete freedom, but he took particular care to give the most precise explanations on everything he wanted to undertake.[466]

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He neglected no argument to justify the course he adopted. Suffren had a very high sense of the rights conferred on him by his position as commander-in-chief. Having a trust in his intelligence that we must find quite legitimate, he never consented to carry out orders that he found contrary to the good of the state. He told himself that, at his distance from his country, no one other than himself could be the judge of events and the appropriate course of action.

The truest patriotism was, in all things, the motive for his actions. The interest of his squadron, that is, of the forces directly under his command, disappeared as soon as the general interest was at stake. After the battle of February 17, he had the greatest desire to fight the English, before they had been joined by the *Magnanime* and the *Sultan*. However, he did not hesitate to remain at anchor off Porto-Novo when he recognized the need to immediately enter into negotiations with Hyder-Ali. He showed constant concern for Goudelour and the garrison. He seemed to have taken on the mission of protecting people he considered incapable of providing for their own safety.

Material difficulties were not the only ones Suffren had to overcome during this campaign. Shortly after our arrival on the coast, General Duchemin, whose powers were equal to his own, received orders from M. de Souillac not to compromise his troops until the arrival of the expected reinforcements from Europe. Furthermore, Hyder-Ali, whose allies we called ourselves, demanded, with a very natural insistence, the support of our soldiers. The general was unable to take the course required by the circumstances, that of giving loyal and eager support to England's most formidable enemy. Hesitant and inactive, he remained until his death without authority over his own people and without influence on the mind of the leader of the Mysorean army.[467]

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Without Suffren's repeated entreaties, the nabob would have made peace with the English. It was at a time when the commander of our squadron was acutely aware of the weight of these difficulties that he was informed of the departure of M. de Bussy, sent to India to take command of the land and sea forces. In acknowledging receipt of the dispatch announcing this news, Suffren did not hide his feelings on this measure from the minister. "By M. de Bussy's patent, I am under his orders. I am only upset because no good can come of it for the service; but I can assure you that I will do my utmost to ensure that no harm comes of it. My way of thinking should be a sure guarantee of this. One of two things: either the naval general knows his job, or he doesn't." In the first case, why put him under the orders of someone who is ignorant of him? In the second, why leave him in guardianship? What use would the orders of someone even more ignorant than him be to him, who will be inland and he at sea? The arrival of the new commander-in-chief became a new cause of embarrassment for the squadron. Suffren did not manage to be exactly informed about the general's intentions, and he never knew when and where he could make his junction with him. M. de Bussy lost precious time at the Isle de France, and he made the crossing of Achem very uselessly where he had no chance of meeting our ships. When he appeared on the scene of war, it was to shut himself up in Goudelour. The role that our troops played under his direction drew from Suffren this exclamation, when he knew that peace had been made: "God be praised for peace!" for, in India, it was clear that even if I had enough to lay down the law, everything would have been lost. I await your orders impatiently and I hope that they will allow me to leave. Only war can make one forget the boredom of certain things." General de Bussy compromised, during this campaign, the brilliant reputation he had acquired at the beginning of his career.[468]

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However, it would be unjust to forget that he had accepted, out of devotion to public life, a command that his age and health would have allowed him to refuse.

It was in his own squadron that Suffren encountered the greatest obstacles to the execution of his plans. This is not to say that we should consider all the complaints made by the commander of the India squadron as legitimate. Suffren waged war with passion, and he had no indulgence for the faults or errors committed by his captains. His dispatches, when written the day after an engagement, betrayed extreme irritation with individuals whenever the results had not met his expectations. The present weather exerted a great influence on his mind. After an action, his opinion of one of his captains was influenced by the events of the day. He readily forgot the previous faults of one who had fought well; but he had a no less great tendency to disregard the services of the officer who, for whatever reason, had played, that day, only a secondary role. Thus, it is not in his dispatches taken in isolation, but in the whole of his correspondence that we must seek the truth about the personnel of his squadron. The captain of the Chilleau was a brave officer who had distinguished himself at Dominica, in Grenada and in the combat of the *Protée* against the ships of Admiral Digby. If peace had been made after the combat of the Praya, he would have been considered guilty of having abandoned his leader. He would have remained, not only before the minister, but also before public opinion, under the blow of this serious accusation. Fortunately for him, the war continued and his position in the squadron had completely changed, when Suffren received from Marshal de Castries a letter worded in the following terms:[469]

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"I have just read in several private letters from the Cape, Sir, that if the *Vengeur* and the *Sphinx* had anchored and carried out your orders, you would have destroyed Mr. Johnstone's fleet. I order you, Sir, on behalf of the King, to report to me what happened during your attack on the Praya, and to send back to France the commanders of your vessels of whom you have had cause to complain. There can be no regard or consideration that can excuse you from making yourself obeyed, and I trust that you will put me in a position to make the King aware of the truth. His Majesty would order a court martial to verify the facts, if political circumstances did not give rise to fears of making public an act contrary to the rights of nations towards the court of Portugal." The attitude of the captain du Chilleau, in the battle of February 17, had earned him the esteem of his chief and the absolute forgetting of what had happened in the bay of San Yago. After the affair of April 12, Suffren asked the minister, with the most earnest insistence, for a reward for the captain du Chilleau, whose conduct was above all praise. "If all the captains had done as he did," he had said in his report, "the English would no longer be." There is no doubt that at that moment Suffren saw, in its true light, the battle of April 16, 1781. The captain du Chilleau had made the mistake of not keeping close enough to the eastern point of the bay of Praya. This fault was obviously very serious, since its consequence had been to prevent him from taking part in the action; but it was contrary to fairness to say that he had abandoned his chief. In a profession as special as that of the navy, officers who never make a mistake are very rare. The first dispatches arriving from India informed the minister that M. du Chilleau, in whom he had feared to find an incompetent or undisciplined officer, was one of the best captains of the squadron. After the battle of September 3, Messrs. de Galle, the valiant captain of the *Annibal* at Praya, de Saint-Félix, whose conduct had been very fine in the three battles of February 17, April 12 and July 6, du Chilleau, de la Pallière, d'Aymar, did not escape the irritation that Suffren felt at the failure of that day.[470]

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The regrettable expressions that we noted in his report to the minister affected all the captains of the squadron, except Messrs. de Bruyères, of the *Illustre*, de Beaumont, of the *Ajax*, and de Cuverville, of the *Vengeur*. Now, after this affair, we had only had one encounter with the enemy, that of June 20, 1783. On that day, the French squadron had performed its duty very brilliantly. However, with the exception of M. de Peynier, cited in Suffren's report, and M. de Salvert, from Flanders, who had conveniently allowed himself to arrive to cover his sailor from the front, none of the captains had had the opportunity to distinguish themselves in any particular way. However, upon his arrival in France, Suffren had rewards granted to most of the officers he had violently attacked in his letter of September 29. One might perhaps believe that certain favors were granted by the minister, apart from the commander-in-chief of the Indian squadron. Suffren's high position and the very clear statements of Marshal de Castries on this point exclude this supposition. You can count on, sir, "that it will be you who will dispose of the pardons that you consider just for the King to make, and that he will approve all the punishments that you have pronounced," the minister wrote to Suffren, announcing his appointment to the rank of lieutenant general.

Messrs. de Bruyères and d'Aymar, having commanded, the first the *Illustre* and the second the *Saint-Michel* in the battle of September 3, was appointed commander de Saint-Louis. The ship captain of the *Chilleau* had a pension of fifteen hundred pounds, and he was made, as was Mr. d'Aymar, head of division in 1786. Mr. de Saint-Félix, to whom a pension of eight hundred pounds had been granted, after the battle of April 12, received a second one of four hundred pounds from the royal treasury, in July 1784.[471]

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Mr. de la Pallière, the former captain of the *Orient*, who was unable to serve actively due to his health, was retired with the commission of division commander and a pension of 3,600 livres. It should not be forgotten that Mr. de la Pallière had done nothing since the battle of September 3, since his ship was lost on its way back to Trincomalee. However, it was stated in the recitals of the decree granting him the benefits indicated above: "Mr. de la Pallière, former ship captain of the Compagnie des Indes, fought the war honorably. Having left France with the ship *Le Sévère*, he took part in four battles, and was at the capture of Trincomalee." Mr. de Galle, appointed ship captain for his conduct at La Praya, was granted a pension at the end of the campaign. After this demonstration, based not only on the correspondence, but also on Suffren's conduct, it is permissible to say that one should not attach too much importance to some of the complaints made against the captains of the Indian squadron. Messrs. d'Aymar, du Chilleau, de Saint-Félix, de la Pallière, de Galle, treated very severely in the letter of September 29, received crosses or pensions. If the Bailiff of Suffren sometimes yielded, in writing a report immediately after a battle, to the liveliness of his impressions, the loyalty of his character placed him above an injustice. It is unnecessary to point out the extreme wisdom which presided over the distribution of some of these rewards. Given without any favor, they show the spirit which directed the illustrious leader of the Indian squadron. Mr. de Peynier is made squadron leader because he is recognized as worthy of exercising these important functions. Suffren does not have such a favorable opinion of the talents of Messrs. d'Aymar and de Bruyères. Nevertheless, these two officers are not forgotten. The cross of Commander de Saint-Louis which is granted to them is given, according to the customs of the time, only to squadron leaders and lieutenant generals.[472]

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What Suffren does not want is for bravery to be given what merit deserves. This doctrine, supported by one of the greatest of all our admirals, must be reaffirmed. What is needed at the head of fleets and armies are not only courageous men, but leaders capable of leading them to victory.

The minister showed great severity towards the officers of whom the commander of the India squadron had had real cause to complain. M. de la Landelle, who had returned to France at his request after the battle of September 3, Lieutenant de Tréhouret, captain of the *Bizarre* when that ship was lost at Goudelour, and the lieutenant who had taken command of the *Artésien* on April 16, 1781, after the death of Captain de Cardaillac, was retired. M. de Forbin obtained, as a very great favor, to leave the service.[1] MM. Bidé de Maurville[2] and de Cillart were struck from the naval lists. M. de Cillart published a long memorandum to explain, if not even to justify his conduct. He had, he said, a very weak crew, few sailors and gunners. Finally, at the moment when he had given in to the fatal determination to lower his flag, his ship was very badly treated. M. de Cillart was wrong not to understand that any discussion on this point was pointless. That the *Sévère*, which had suffered greatly during the first period of the battle, was inconvenienced by the very heavy fire of the *Sultan*, was not in doubt.

1. Count de Forbin, commanding the *Vengeur* at La Praya and in India, a naval captain in the department of Toulon, having obtained permission to leave the service, will no longer be listed on the review lists as of September 12, 1784 (naval archives). Count de Forbin had been imprisoned in the Château du Pont-Saint-Esprit upon his arrival in France. He remained there until this decision was made.

2. Captain Bidé de Maurville, commanding the *Artésien* in India, consistently misbehaved in the battles of February 17, April 12, and July 6, 1782. On June 5, he allowed an English vessel to escape by giving chase without orders. Detained at the Château de l'Île de Ré upon his arrival in France, he was released on July 25, 1784, the day he was struck from the naval lists (naval archives).[473]

But the battle between these two vessels was only to last as long as it took the *Sultan* to complete his tack. Captain James Watt, who was far from his men and very close to us, had and could have no other thought than to flee. This, moreover, is what he did as soon as he was underway. It would have been enough for Mr. de Cillart to exert a little energy to escape the dreadful situation in which he found himself. The *Sévère* had played a very modest role on February 17 and April 12, but he had very bravely performed his duty on July 6. It is clear that this officer lost his head when he was side by side with the *Sultan*. Among the French vessels that were circling around him, some of which were maneuvering to come to his aid, he saw only ships that were abandoning him. M. de Tromelin had not left the Indian squadron under the same conditions as Messrs. de Maurville and de Forbin. After the battle of September 3, he had obtained permission from the commander-in-chief to return to France. The captain of the *Annibal* had fought well on April 12, and even better on July 6, but his role had been nil on February 17 and September 3. The functions of division chief that M. de Tromelin was fulfilling, and the difficulties that had arisen between Suffren and him, at the Isle de France, regarding the command of the *Annibal*, had drawn the minister's attention to him. When it was learned in Paris that he had voluntarily resigned from the command of his ship, his removal from the naval lists was decided.[1] M. de Tromelin published a long memorandum, and he took very active steps to obtain that the measure taken against him be revoked. The minister, who accused him of having systematically opposed his superior and of having shown great ignorance or ill will, was inflexible.

1. M. de Tromelin, commanding the *Annibal* (French) under Suffren, was struck off the naval lists in execution of the royal decision of July 25, 1784, based on the complaints filed against him by M. de Suffren (naval archives).[474]

Mr. de Tromelin should have imitated the conduct of Messrs. de Saint-Félix and de Galle. Upon their arrival at the Isle of France, these two officers loudly expressed their regret at being separated from the squadron, and their desire to rejoin it as soon as their health permitted.[1] Both had already commanded ships with which they had taken part in several battles. Nevertheless, they did not hesitate to accept the position of second captain, Mr. de Galle on the *Argonaute*, and Mr. de Saint-Félix on the *Fendant*, to return to India.[2] In any case, we must express regret that Messrs. de Forbin, de Maurville, and de Tromelin were not brought before a court martial. The facts would have been better known, and the ruling that would have been issued would have prevented any claims from being filed.

We have shown that the conduct of the officers of the India squadron should not be judged by a few letters from Suffren, but by his entire correspondence. We will add that we must not confuse those who do not know how to fight with those who do not want to. On the battlefield, and even in maneuvers carried out without the enemy present, good will is not enough.

1. It appears that Messrs. de Galle and de Saint-Félix did not want to be included in the list of those whom boredom with their work or ill will brought back to the islands. (Letter from Marshal de Castries to M. de Souillac, April 20, 1783.)

2. On December 10, 1782, M. de Galle embarked from the Isle of France as second captain on the *Argonaute*, commanded by Clavières. He was present on this ship at the battle of June 20, 1783. The next day, M. de Suffren offered him command of the *Ajax*, but the poor state into which his health had fallen did not allow him to accept this flattering testimony of the kindness of his general. The *Argonaute* remaining in India, he transferred to the *Vengeur* as second captain. (Statements of the services of M. de Galle.) M. de Saint-Félix had embarked on the ship *Fendant* as second captain, on December 1, 1782, at the Ile de France. He attended the battle of June 20, 1783 on this ship, and Suffren gave him command of the *Flamand* the next day.[475]

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Lieutenant de Tréhouret, to whom Suffren had entrusted command of the *Bizarre* after the departure of M. de la Landelle, was greatly honored by his new position, and he desired nothing more than to fulfill it to the satisfaction of his commander. However, he lost this ship while anchoring in the Goudelour harbor in very fine weather. This officer was punished for this fault by being retired. It is safe to say that he paid dearly for the honor of having commanded a ship of the line too soon. What is undeniably true is the extreme mediocrity of most of the captains and officers under Suffren's command.[1] This situation was due to the general state of the navy at that time, which we will describe.

Preparations for the American War of Independence began the day after the Treaty of Paris was signed. The Duke of Choiseul worked quietly, so as not to attract England's attention, but with the greatest activity to reorganize our naval forces. There was a moment in 1776 when war was considered very imminent. M. de Sartines, preoccupied with the question of personnel, retired officers whose age or state of health rendered them incapable of active service. Promotions were made, and we see in the reports addressed to the King for the execution of these measures the very clear intention on the part of the minister to advance only good officers.

1. I cannot go into any details, but if, in this squadron, we do not change five or six captains, we will never get anything done. (Letter from Suffren to the Minister of the Navy.) Suffren had already written, regarding the affair of February 17, that he could not dismiss the captains with whom he was dissatisfied, because he would not find officers in his squadron capable enough to replace them.

We must send us officers, he said in another letter, because without them no squadron is possible. One could fairly apply to a certain number of captains what Suffren said of Messrs. Forbin, Maurville, Bouvet, de la Landelle, and Cillart after the battle of April 17: They have done very poorly. However, this is not the case for a court martial or for dismantling these gentlemen.[476]

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The results of the Battle of Ushant demonstrated the effectiveness of the means employed since 1763 to rebuild our navy. Certain of being equal to our adversaries, we no longer had to worry about anything other than their numbers. It soon became clear that, although we had done well, we had not done enough. The peace that was considered imminent did not materialize. Spain joined France, but this power, absorbed by the thought of capturing Gibraltar, was of little assistance to us. After Spain, it was the turn of the States-General to declare itself against England. The alliance with Holland only created difficulties for us, and France found itself almost alone facing its powerful adversary.[1] Our navy did not shy away from this task, but it was forced to resort to means that weakened it. Normally, the ships' garrisons were composed of soldiers belonging to the marine troops. These men, accustomed to life on board, well-versed in all the demands of their profession, were no longer numerous enough and were replaced by soldiers borrowed from the army. When sailors became scarce, the proportion of seamen in the composition of crews was reduced. Captains often found themselves happy to obtain soldiers from the naval troops in place of sailors who could not be given to them.

The question of staffs presented no less difficulties. It was not possible to comply with the regulations concerning the embarkation of officers.2

1. The more I reflect on this matter (it was Great Britain's declaration of war on Holland), the more difficult it is for me to determine whether we should rejoice in this event or grieve over it. (Letter from Mr. de Vergennes to Mr. de Montmorin.)

2. A regulation of February 14, 1778 stated that ships and frigates would have, according to their rank, the number of officers designated below, namely: ships of one hundred guns and above, two ship captains, five lieutenants, five ensigns and four auxiliary officers; ships of ninety, two ship captains, five lieutenants, five ensigns and three auxiliary officers; ships of eighty, two ship captains, four lieutenants, four ensigns and three auxiliary officers; ships of seventy-four, two ship captains, four lieutenants, three ensigns and three auxiliary officers; ships of sixty-four, one ship captain, four ship lieutenants, three ensigns and three auxiliary officers; ships of fifty, one ship captain, four ship lieutenants, two ensigns and two auxiliary officers. Frigates commanded by a ship captain had to have a ship lieutenant, two ensigns and three auxiliary officers. Those commanded by a ship lieutenant had a ship lieutenant, two ensigns and three auxiliary officers.[477]

As early as July 1778, the Count of Orvilliers reported the inadequacy of the cadre. That year, we had 176 armed vessels. This figure rose to 264 in 1779, and to 325 in 1782. It was necessary to replace the officers killed, those who, due to their health or injuries, were unfit to sail, and to provide for the needs necessitated by the new armaments. Numerous promotions took place. The cadre of ship captains lost its solidity, and that of lieutenants and ensigns was depleted. The minister found himself obliged to employ all the officers, even those he would have gladly dismissed. The number of auxiliary officers was increased, and former officers of the Compagnie des Indes were called upon. The conditions under which the *Protecteur* was captured by the *Foudroyant* demonstrate the results that can be achieved when, during peacetime, sufficient resources are not secured for waging war.[1] These armaments, which were out of proportion to our preparations, would have completely disorganized the naval personnel if it had not been extremely solid. The French government, at the beginning of the war, intended to act vigorously in India.

1. It will be recalled that the most senior officer of a seventy-four-man ship was a young ensign of nineteen. In the battle of the Bellone and the Cowentry, the captain, Lieutenant de Pierrevert, nephew of Suffren, having been killed, was succeeded by an auxiliary officer. The latter having suffered the same fate as his captain, command of the frigate passed to a Neapolitan officer.[478]

A first squadron, ready to sail for the Isle of France, suddenly received orders to join Count d'Estaing, who was being held in check at Martinique by Admiral Byron. A second squadron, with the same destination, was about to set sail when it was sacrificed to an equally pressing need. The Ministry, which recognized the imperative need to send troops to America, did not have sufficient forces to protect their passage. It is needless to recall the considerable results achieved by Rochambeau's corps. A few ships, almost all poorly armed, were dispatched individually to the Isle of France.[1] The naval division of India had until then played too inconspicuous a role for the commands of these ships to be sought. Officers, regardless of rank, requested to serve where they were most likely to encounter the enemy, that is, in Europe and the Antilles.[2] When, later, the India squadron came under Suffren's command, most of the captains found themselves unable to meet the obligations imposed on them by the enterprising genius of their leader.[3]

1. We must add that the ships sent to the Isle of France arrived at their destination extremely weakened. Captain d'Orves, while in port at the Cape of Good Hope with the ship Orient, wrote to the minister that he had lost forty-nine men during his crossing. He announced that he would leave twenty men behind in the colony upon departure. He had 278 men on the regulars or unfit for service. The other ships did not suffer as much as *Orient*, but all lost men, and they had a large number of sick men.

2. The admirals serving in Europe and the Antilles used their influence to keep the best officers in their squadrons. Suffren was unable to get Captain d'Albert de Rions to come with him, although the minister was willing to grant him. D'Albert, Suffren wrote in a private letter dated February 26, 1781, was as eager to come with me as I was to have him: "M. de Grasse opposed it and won."

3. The following will provide a further example of the difficulties Suffren and his captains had to contend with. Two French ships, the *Annibal* and the *Ajax*, returning to Europe after the peace, landed at the Cape of Good Hope. The *Annibal* had lost sixty men to scurvy during its voyage, and it had no fewer than one hundred and sixty sick men. Thirty-seven men had died on board the *Ajax* since leaving Trincomalee, and there were one hundred and thirty men on the crews. The *Annibal* had taken on up to eighteen inches of water an hour.[479]

This situation was so well known in Paris that the Marshal wrote to Suffren on April 17, 1782: "You have seen, sir, from all the arrangements that followed your departure, that the King intended to appoint to the command of the ships that passed through India only officers capable of assisting you in operations that M. d'Orves and you deemed necessary." Driven by the thought of reducing the English squadron to impotence, Suffren only wanted decisive actions. When circumstances did not allow him to bring to his attack the method and regularity that would have made everyone's task easier, his signals clearly indicated the goal he was pursuing. He believed that his captains would know how to act without waiting for orders that could no longer be given once the operation had begun. This hope was constantly dashed. Except for the incident of June 20, incidents occurred in the battles fought on the Coromandel Coast that forced the captains to take advice only from themselves. On February 17, April 12, July 6 after the wind shift, and September 3, success depended on the individual abilities of each of them. Suffren did not find in his squadron the flexibility and ease of maneuver that would have been necessary to carry out his plans. Is it surprising that he complained so bitterly about the inferiority of his captains? When one considers the obstacles he had to overcome, his genius seems even greater.

At the time peace was signed, public opinion in France did not particularly distinguish any of the admirals who had commanded in Europe, the Antilles, or on the coasts of America. The battle of Ushant and the services of Lieutenant General d'Orvilliers had been lost sight of, following the disastrous expedition of 1779.[480]

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These recent events were still too recent to do this general officer the justice he was due. Count d'Estaing, having returned to France after his defeat off Savannah, had only returned to sea to lead a squadron from Cadiz to Brest. The brilliant results of the 1781 campaign had given Count de Grasse a popularity that had vanished the day the fatal battle off Dominica became known. There remained Lieutenant-Generals de Guichen and de Lamotte-Picquet. The former had led his squadron well in the three encounters he had with Rodney in 1780. While he had not inflicted heavy losses on the enemy, he had suffered none. At the end of that campaign, he had resigned from his command, finding it beyond his strength, and since then, he had played only a secondary role. As for Lamotte-Picquet, we remember the audacity he had displayed in December 1779, when he went with four ships to meet Parker's squadron. But amid the great events that had occurred during this war, he had not held any important command.[1] We will not speak of squadron leader de Ternay, who died in Rhode Island before finding the opportunity to distinguish himself. When Suffren took command of the division that the minister was sending to the Isle of France in 1781, he had no reputation outside the navy.

1. It is inexplicable why Lamotte-Picquet was not employed during this war in a manner more in keeping with his merit. It seems that no command would have been beyond his strength. We should not attach too much importance to what is said about officers at their entry into their careers. The hopes that were then conceived did not always come true. Nevertheless, one will read with interest the following note given to Lamotte-Picquet in 1742. He was then twenty-two years old: "Lamotte-Picquet has a lot of wit and application, has done his studies well, is a good geometer, great arithmetician, grasps all parts of the profession with ease. Esteemed by everyone, is a very worthy subject, will be an excellent officer, having omitted nothing in his campaigns to acquire all the necessary knowledge, is a man on whom one can cast one's eyes for certain jobs because of his talents."[481]

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The boldness of his maneuver at the Praya affair drew attention to him. His first battles in India had a very great impact in France. The advantages he won on February 17, April 12, and July 6 gave great satisfaction to the national pride, cruelly wounded by the defeat of the Count of Grasse. The capture of Trincomalee and the campaign of 1783 aroused general admiration and crowned his reputation.[1] Suffren's name acquired, not only in our country and among our allies, but throughout Europe, a dazzling prestige. France was not ungrateful to the man who, not far from the scene of the glory of the Dupleix and Labourdonnaye, had so brilliantly upheld the honor of our flag. Wherever he appeared, his presence aroused extraordinary enthusiasm. Crowds flocked to see him and greet him with cheers. Louis XVI, the Queen, and members of the royal family treated him with particular distinction. France's greatest servants, Turenne, Marshal of Saxony, had not been better received. Appointed squadron leader in 1782, Suffren had been made lieutenant general in 1783. The King decided that a fourth vice-admiral position would be created in his favor, and on April 18, 1784, he was elevated to this rank.[2]

1. Suffren had been appointed squadron leader for the Praya affair. The rank of lieutenant general was a reward for the battles of February 17, April 12, and July 6. In a private letter, Suffren appreciated, as follows, what he had done after this last battle: "I enjoy, my dear friend, the pleasure that you will have in learning, in the month of March 1782, that I am squadron leader, and in March 83 that I am lieutenant general. By reading the gazette, because it is by there that you will have learned it, you will have made a fine cry of joy. Now, I tell you in the sincerity of my heart and for you alone. What I have done since is worth infinitely more than what I had done previously. You know the capture and the battle of Trincomalee, but the end of the campaign and what happened from the month of March until the end of June is far above all that has been done in the navy since I have been there; Perhaps there was more luck than good play, but the result is pleasant for me and my friends, and very advantageous for the State, because the squadron was risky and the army lost. Also I believe that the Marquis de Castries will not regret having granted me an unheard-of favor.

2. The position of vice-admiral was not only a military rank; it was also one of the most important offices of state. The fourth position of vice-admiral created for Suffren was to be abolished after his death. The text of the royal order conferred on him by this office can be found at the end of this volume. This document is particularly interesting because it recounts Suffren's service before and during the Indian campaign.[482]

April 1784, he was elevated to this rank. The States-General sent a deputation to Paris to present him with a sword of honor. They also had a medal struck to commemorate the services the illustrious admiral had rendered to Holland.

END.[483]

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APPENDIX

Memorandum to serve as instructions to Mr. Gérard, Secretary of the Council of State, who is to reside, on behalf of the King, with the General Congress of the United States.

March 29, 1778.

The United States of America having given a legal basis to their independence by the act of July 4, 1776, the King judged that his political interest should not oppose the consistency they could acquire; that relations useful to his kingdom could even result from it. It is with this in mind that His Majesty granted them in his ports all the commercial facilities compatible with the commitments then existing.

The defeat of General Burgoyne1 having precipitated events beyond all expectations, the King felt the need to finally take a decisive stand with regard to America. This necessity became all the more urgent as England, for its part, began to open its eyes to its faults and its impotence and seriously considered ways to reconcile with its colonies; the very conditions it proposed to have them accept so manifestly demonstrated its hostile aim against France that there was not a moment to lose if one seriously wanted to prevent its effect.

Consequently, the King negotiated with the deputies of Congress; and a treaty of friendship and commerce and a treaty of possible alliance were concluded with them on February 6. As Mr. Gérard himself signed and dispatched these treaties, it would be superfluous to recall here the circumstances that preceded and accompanied them; it will suffice to submit copies to him, and to make known the spirit in which they were conducted and the means that the King is resolved to employ to fulfill them.

1. At Saratoga.[484]

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The independence of North America and its permanent union with France were the King's principal goal, and it is to ensure both that His Majesty has complied with the possible stipulations contained in the treaty of alliance, and that, in the treaty of commerce, he has not secured any exclusive advantage.

Great Britain, not regarding the friendly communication made to her of the signing of the treaty of commerce as a provocation of war or an act of hostility, renders absolute and definitive the stipulations, which were still only possible; it is their execution that is the question today.

The first and most essential of all is that neither party shall make peace or truce without the consent of the other; Its faithful execution will guarantee the advantages that both parties may obtain during the war, and it is essential that Mr. Gérard impress upon Congress this truth, and thereby protect it against suggestions that the English might make to conclude a separate peace. He will assure it, at the same time, in the most positive manner, that the King, for his part, will reject any proposal of this nature made to him by the common enemy, and that he will not lay down arms until the full and absolute independence of the thirteen United States has been recognized by Great Britain.

As for the military operations that the two parties must undertake, they will depend on the circumstances. However, Mr. Gérard will be able to assure Congress that the King will make every effort to prevent England from sending new forces to America, by means of which the Americans will be able to defeat General Howe's army all the more easily, since there is reason to be confident that the fleet commanded by Count d'Estaing will destroy the English squadron in the Delaware, or at least prevent it from supplying the royal army.

It is possible that the operations of the Continental Army and the fleet will need to be combined; but since neither this need nor the means to satisfy it can be foreseen at this time, the arrangements that will be made can only be agreed upon with the commander of the fleet, who will be given the necessary powers for this purpose. There is one point that is of great importance to the King, and which will require all the dexterity of Mr. Gérard: these are the stipulations to be made in favor of Spain.[485]

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He knows that this power took no part in either treaty, although it is not averse to it, and that, until now, it has not articulated any conditions under which it might subsequently accede to them. However, there is reason to believe that it would like to acquire the Florida Islands, a share in the fisheries on the banks of Newfoundland and Jamaica. This last object is in the King's hands, since it has eventually secured it by the treaty of alliance. The second will also depend on it, at least in large part, so there will be nothing to negotiate on this side with Congress.

As for the Florida Islands, they are part of the American plan of conquest; it will therefore be a matter of preparing them for a possible withdrawal; the King has entrusted Mr. Gérard with this in a special manner, and His Majesty relies entirely on his prudence regarding the means to be employed to achieve this objective. It will only be pointed out to him that he will carefully avoid speaking in the name of Spain, for His Catholic Majesty has not yet articulated anything regarding his intentions and views. Moreover, Mr. Gerard knows the principal reasons why Spain must desire possession of the Floridas: he will assert them as much as he can; but if he cannot succeed in obtaining everything, he will at least strive to obtain Pensacola and the parts of the coasts that will be judged to be most convenient to the court of Madrid.

The King expects that the court of London will make its last efforts to form a party in Congress and to sow division in the different provinces. Mr. Gerard will feel for himself how important it is to break all his measures, and to maintain the union and perfect harmony that have reigned until now among the thirteen confederated provinces.

Mr. Gérard is not told what means he will have to employ to achieve this goal: they will depend on local circumstances, about which there is no way of knowing at this time. Mr. Gérard knows that Congress has not yet ratified the two treaties. But it is to be presumed that this essential formality for validity will be fulfilled upon his arrival in America; if, however, this were not the case, his first concern would be to engage Congress, and it is not to be presumed that he would refuse.

The deputies of Congress had proposed to the King that he undertake to favor the conquest that the Americans would undertake of Canada, Nova Scotia, and the Floridas, and there is reason to believe that the project is very close to the heart of Congress. But the King considered that the possession of these three countries, or at least of Canada by England, would be a useful principle of concern and vigilance for the Americans, which would make them feel more strongly the need they have for the alliance and friendship of the King; it is not in his interest to destroy it.[486]

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Accordingly, His Majesty believes that he should not make any commitment relating to the conquest in question. However, if Congress opens the door, as is presumable, Mr. Gérard will respond that the King will always lend himself eagerly to anything that may suit the United States, and that he will willingly contribute to the execution of their plan of conquest, as much as circumstances permit; but that the uncertainty and variability of his commitments do not allow him to make a formal commitment. Such is His Majesty's principle with regard to this subject, and his intention is that Mr. Gérard take it as the basis of his language and his insinuations. If, however, Congress became too pressing, and Mr. Gérard judged that the King could not refuse to cooperate with his views without raising suspicions about his good will and the rectitude of his intentions, he could then condescend to their wishes, but by making them understand that the conquest that is to be made should not be an essential condition of the next peace. Mr. Gérard will feel for himself that this last insinuation must be made with enough dexterity so as not to upset Congress.

It is also likely that Congress will express a desire to obtain subsidies from France. But Mr. Gérard will point out to him that the efforts that the King is making for the American cause require extraordinary expenses from him that absorb all his means; that, moreover, sending the fleet to North America, charged with doing all possible harm to the English, will create a diversion infinitely more advantageous for the Americans than if the King were to limit himself to giving them money. His Majesty is convinced that Congress will readily yield to such overriding reasons.

Mr. Gérard is undoubtedly convinced of the full importance of the mission that the King entrusts to his care; His Majesty is convinced that he will give him, on this occasion, new proofs of his capacity, his attachment to his person and his zeal for his service.[487]

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Provisions granted by the King, on April 4, 1784, to his dearest and beloved Bailiff of Suffren Saint-Tropez, Lieutenant General of his naval forces, for a fourth position of Vice-Admiral of France, which, by a special distinction, the King created for him alone, to give him striking marks of his satisfaction, stating that the proofs he has constantly given, for nearly forty years, of his valor, his vigilance, his good conduct and his talents, make His Majesty fully convinced of his affection for his service and of his experience in war and navigation; that having been made a naval guard in October 1743, he was embarked in this capacity, in 1744, on the ship *Le Solide*, part of the combined fleet of France and Spain, and was in combat with that fleet, on February 22, off Cape Sicié; he was again there the same year, on the ship the *Trident*, on which he campaigned in the Mediterranean and then in Martinique, in 1745, on the corvette the *Palme*, which fought in the harbor at Calais; in 1746, on the ship the *Trident*, part of the squadron of the Duke of Anville; in 1747, on the ship the *Monarque* of the squadron of the Sieur de l'Etenduère, which suffered, at Cape Finisterre, a brilliant but unfortunate combat, in which he received two slight wounds and was taken prisoner; that having been made ship's ensign, in April 1748, he went to Malta to make his caravans there until 1751; in 1753, he was embarked on the galley the *Hardie*, and, in 1752, on the frigate the *Rose*, part of the squadron commanded by the Sieur de la Galissonnière, evolution campaign; in 1755, he went to Brest and was embarked there on the *Dauphin-Royal*, armed as a transport, in the squadron of Sieur du Bois de la Motte; was made lieutenant of the ship in March 1756, and, having embarked on the ship *l'Orphée*, forming part of the squadron commanded by Sieur de la Galissonnière, he found himself in combat on Minorca; he was embarked, in 1759, on the ship *l'Océan*, commanded by Sieur de la Clue, which ran aground, after a battle, on the coast of Lagos where he was captured; that not being able to be exchanged during the rest of the war, he went to Malta and made some campaigns there until peace; in 1763, he was embarked on the frigate *Pleyade*, forming part of the division destined to cruise against the Salatins; In 1764, he had command of the chebeck *Caméléon*, having the same destination, and saved himself from a shipwreck by his vigor and courage; in 1765, he commanded a division of chebeks in the Mediterranean, joined the squadron commanded by Mr. Duchaffault, and found himself in the bombardment of Salé and Larache, and then returned with his division to the Mediterranean, where he cruised until the month of October; in 1767, he was embarked at Brest on the[488]

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ship the *Union*, commanded by the Count of Breugnon; sent on embassy to Morocco, he was made frigate captain upon returning from the campaign; in 1769, he went to Malta to command a galley, and in 1770, he was involved in the bombardment of Bizerte; he was made ship captain in February 1772, and had command of the frigate the *Mignonne*: in 1774, the same command; in 1776, that of the frigate *Alcmène*, in the evolution squadron commanded by Mr. Duchaffault, and, in 1777, that of the ship *Fantasque* in the squadron of Mr. Barras cruising on the coast of Provence; that the confidence that His Majesty already had determined him, in 1778, to give him command of the same vessel in the squadron of Count d'Estaing, which he sent to the aid of the United States of America; that he fully justified this confidence in this campaign which lasted nearly two years, and during which he distinguished himself in a remarkable manner on all occasions which presented themselves, and particularly at Newport, where he forced the entrance to the harbor and forced five English frigates to burn themselves; and in the battle of July 6, 1779, off Grenada, where he was leader throughout the time that the two armies fought on opposite sides and had sixty men killed or wounded; that on the very advantageous accounts that the Count d'Estaing gave to His Majesty of his conduct during this campaign, he showed his satisfaction by granting him a pension of 1500 pounds, that in 1780 His Majesty entrusted him with the command of the vessels *Zélé* and *Marseillais* with which he made a cruise, joined at Cadiz the combined army of France and Spain, commanded by the Lord of Cordova, cruised with it and then returned to Brest under the orders of the Count d'Estaing; that at the beginning of 1781, His Majesty wishing to send a division of his vessels to the seas of India to increase his forces there and first help the Cape of Good Hope, he believed he could not make a better choice than him for this command, and that it was in this campaign that he developed all his talents, as well as the most active zeal for the success and glory of his arms; that, having left Brest on March 20, 1781, with this division of five vessels and a body of troops and artillery, he found, on April 16, at the harbor of Praya, on the island of San Yago, the English squadron sent to attack the Cape of Good Hope; that, considering less the danger than the importance of the enterprise, he attacked it at anchor, delayed it by the damage he caused it, arrived before it at the Cape, disembarked his troops there and saved this establishment; that he joined, in the month of October, the squadron[489]

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commanded by Sieur d'Orves, at the Isle of France, and left with her in December for the Coromandel Coast. On January 22, 1782, he chased and captured, after a half-hour's battle, the English ship *Hannibal* of fifty guns; having become commander-in-chief, by the death of Sieur d'Orves, on February 9, he defeated, on the 17th, off Sadras, the English squadron which took advantage of the night to escape his pursuit. On the 22nd, he landed at Porto Novo the land army he was transporting and its munitions, and he left again to go and look for the English squadron, joined it on April 12, after having chased it for three days on the coast of Ceylon, delivered a very lively fight which was not finished until night, damaged it and put it in such distress that it sought its safety by anchoring in inaccessible banks, and kept it blocked, for six days, in this position, set sail and then cruised to attract it to a new fight, but the English squadron having shut itself up in Trincomalee, he decided to return to the coast of Coromandel; that, on July 2, having learned that the English squadron had left Trincomalee and anchored in front of Negapatam, he went to meet it, fought it vigorously, on July 6, caused it notable damage which forced it to return to Negapatam, and he came to repair his own at Goudelour. The nabob Hyder-Ali Kan Bahader, ally of His Majesty, went, at the head of one hundred thousand men, to confer with him on the combined operations, and to give him great marks of esteem and confidence; that, on August 1, he left Goudelour and joined, on the 23rd, His Majesty's ships, the *Illustre* and the *Saint-Michel*, which brought him a convoy. With this reinforcement, he went to attack Trincomalee, landed there and took possession of the two forts in five days; that, on September 3, the English squadron having come to the aid of this place, he set sail, attacked it and forced it to return to Madras, which determined General Coot, camped with his army near Pondicherry and threatening Goudelour, to also withdraw towards Madras; that he returned to Trincomalee to repair his ships, and particularly his own which had supported the greatest efforts of the English fleet and had covered itself with glory; that at the beginning of 1783, after having wintered at Achem, he made a cruise on the coast of Orixa, took an English frigate, the *Cowentry*, took or destroyed fifty merchant ships, came to Trincomalee to await the Marquis de Bussy, commander-in-chief of His Majesty's forces in Asia, left with him in March, took him to the coast of Coromandel, disembarked the army and its munitions there, returned to Trincomalee; that, on June 11, having learned of the English fleet's movements[490]

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threatening Goudelour, he set sail with the squadron under his command, then composed of fifteen vessels, two frigates and a fire ship; arrived on the 13th at the coast, found himself on the 16th in the presence of the English squadron, composed of eighteen vessels, all copper-clad, but could not engage in combat as night fell; on the 17th, he went to Goudelour, took troops there to complete his crews, maneuvered to dispute the wind with the English squadron until the 20th, at four o'clock in the evening, when he managed to engage in combat which only ended with nightfall, during which the English squadron escaped; that it reappeared on the 22nd, was pursued by force of sail, took flight, and surrendered to Madras; that thus Goudelour and the land army found themselves free; that peace put an end to these victories and these enterprises, conducted with as much activity and audacity as accuracy and combination; that as fertile in resources to repair his ships and support his crews as constant in fighting against difficulties and obstacles, the bailiff of Suffren found the means to keep his squadron for eighteen months on the coasts of India almost without other help than that of his genius and that which his victories over the enemy procured for him; that after having provided for the protection of His Majesty's establishments by a division of ships left in these seas, he made arrangements for the return of the others to Europe and arrived at Toulon, in the month of March 1784, on the ship the *Héros* which he commanded; that so many important and distinguished services determined His Majesty, during this glorious campaign, to advance him successively to the rank of squadron leader, in January 1782, and to that of lieutenant general of his naval forces, in February 1783; that upon his arrival at court, His Majesty gave him the most distinguished testimonies of his esteem and satisfaction, designated him knight of his orders, granted him entry to his chamber, and that, wishing to raise him to the first dignities of the navy and to the superior command of his naval forces of which he is so worthy by his eminent qualities, He created, for him, a fourth position of vice-admiral. These provisions, dated Versailles, signed Louis and by the King, Marshal de Castries, and sealed, with the act of his taking the oath in the hands of His Majesty for the said office, dated April 18, 1784.

Signed: Marshal de CASTRIES.[491]

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Judging by a note that we reproduce below, there was at one point talk of making Suffren Marshal of France, as Tourville, the two d'Estrées, and Châteaurenaud had been. This note reads as follows: "The bailiff of Suffren, in his memorandum requesting the rank of Marshal of France, limited himself to outlining his services. He did not point out that Messrs. d'Estrées, father and son, Messrs. de Tourville and de Châteaurenaud, obtained this dignity without having as many years of service and without having defeated the enemy as many times. M. de Tourville had been defeated at the Battle of La Hogue, and M. de Châteaurenaud's squadron had been burned in the port of Vigo. He did not point out that, although the navy was raised by the King, who applied himself to it and who knows it well, this service is not generally sought after by the great lords, less because it is hard than because it is less rewarded than in land service. To the importance of giving emulation to the corps through the hope of rewards, there is a political reason. In the event of war, we would be joined with the Spanish, and, if marshals of France were made at this time, they would believe that they were made to command them, which could put them in a bad mood."

Letter from the Marquis de Castries to the Bailiff of Suffren.

Versailles, April 6, 1783.

Having had no news, Sir, of M. de Bussy since July of last year, and several indirect warnings giving me the greatest concern about his deteriorating health, I believed I should take the King's orders in the event that my said Sieur de Bussy dies or fails to appear before the execution of the definitive treaty. His Majesty has felt the need to provide for this and to prevent the disadvantages that could result from the sharing of authority, and judging that he cannot better place his trust than in your hands, in the absence of M. de Bussy, he gives you command-in-chief of his forces and his establishments beyond the Cape of Good Hope, with the same full powers that he had granted to my said Sieur de Bussy.

And he orders that, should the said foreseen event occur, you be recognized, by whomever it may concern, as commander-in-chief, without any other order from him than this present letter.[492]

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I will send, via the King's frigate, *Surveillante*, His Majesty's orders on this subject to the Isle of France and the Cape of Good Hope.

Letter from the Marquis de Castries to the Bailiff de Suffren.

Versailles, April 6, 1783.

Since the letter I had the honor of writing to you through Mr. Froment, I have received dispatches informing us of the capture of Trincomalee and the retreat of the English naval force under Madras. This is the fifth time you have fought the English.

……..

I am in the greatest ignorance of what has happened on the coast. If we had been able to know of your successes before the signing of the preliminaries, it is to be presumed that we could have taken advantage of our situation. ……

…….I cannot express to you too much the King's satisfaction with the conduct you are maintaining at the head of his fleet. It is noteworthy that in presenting the difficulties of all kinds that you encounter, you always perceive the means to overcome them, and the observations you addressed to me on the affairs of the Indies confirmed the opinion you had already given him that you were a man of war in all respects. These observations no longer require a response, given the signing of the preliminaries. The means of putting them into execution are not without difficulties, if the English wish to abuse their advantages. It is on this assumption and on the assumption that M. de Bussy could be dead, that I desired that you replace him in general command, until the signing of the peace treaty. This is a sacrifice that I make for the good of the King's service, for I would have liked to be able to consult you on many arrangements to be made for the navy.

I am very sorry not to have been able to pull M. d'Albert de Rions from the others' line. If the war had continued, I would have sent him to you. Preserve your health, it is precious to the King and the State and do not doubt my desire to give you proof of an inviolable attachment.[493]

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Opinion of the three ports on the observations of Mr. Chevalier de Suffren.

In accordance with the orders of Monseigneur, these observations, detailed in the attached sheet, were communicated to the naval councils of Brest, Toulon, and Rochefort without naming the author. Here are the results of the opinion of the three ports:

1. PROPOSAL

To determine whether the second captain of a ship would not be more usefully employed in the second battery than on the forecastle.

ANSWER

The three ports agree to keep this officer on the forecastle.

2. PROPOSAL

Whether it would not be appropriate to increase the number of oar-powered boats on a ship.

ANSWER

The port of Brest generally leans towards leaving things as they are; But Count Duchaffault, along with a few other officers, and the ports of Toulon and Rochefort, are in favor of having an additional boats.

3. PROPOSAL

Whether it is appropriate to use Mr. Franklin's electrical conductor on board ships.

ANSWER

While agreeing on the advantages this conductor could provide, the three ports between them see many difficulties in installing and maintaining it on board.

4. PROPOSAL

Whether it would not be advantageous to load shells on ships,

ANSWER

The port of Brest prefers to increase the number of swivel guns; the other two ports propose testing the shells, but they do not suggest any presumption for or against.[494]

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5. PROPOSAL

Whether it would not be appropriate to cast eight- or twelve-pounder guns for use on ships' longboats.

ANSWER

The port of Toulon does not support the need to mount cannons on longboats; those of Brest and Rochefort agree that the guns on the forecastles can be used on longboats, provided they have flat gun carriages and flying platforms for their use.

It follows from the opinion of the three ports that, regarding the various changes proposed by Mr. de Suffren, the members have only focused on increasing the number of rowing vessels. The testing of shells is proposed purely and simply; and, as for the guns to be mounted on longboats, as those on the ships' forecastles can be used there, the only question is to give them special gun carriages……

The minister wrote at the bottom of this note: Communicate everything to M. de Suffren.

Suffren reconsidered these proposals when he fitted out the *Zélé* in Toulon in 1779. He sent the minister several reports from which we borrow the following passages:
1. The naval ordinance does not specify the officers' positions on ships in the event of combat. The custom has always been to place the second mate on the forecastle. This position is very exposed, but that is the only thing that flatters it. The second mate, being under the captain's supervision, commands nothing, has very few men under his command, and occupies a position that would be filled by an ensign. I believe he should have the inspection of both batteries and command the second in particular, as it is the most exposed to fire; it is the position of honor. He would also be able to take command if the captain were killed or wounded, and to put himself at the head of the men destined for the boarding party if the opportunity arose.

2. Last week, it was considered that the boats equipped for this purpose could be armed with a forecastle cannon. This idea, despite its usefulness, has been abandoned. I think it's because of the weight of the cannon; but now, especially since the light artillery system prevails, it would be possible to cast pieces intended for this purpose, eight-pounders that could weigh only 1200 pounds.[495]

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If the cost of cast iron were to stop, they could be made of iron. On the longboats of eighty-gun ships, twelve-caliber guns could be used.

Fire accidents demonstrate only too well the necessity of having fire engines on ships. There is no English frigate that doesn't have them. I believe the ships armed at Brest have them. In Toulon, they weren't being provided when I left. The incident of my topmast being blown off by thunder made me think of Franklin's electrical conductor. It's too small an expense not to provide them for all ships.

We brought back, regarding the battle off Dominica, a note from Suffren relating to the use of howitzers on ships.[496]

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